

ANGLO- SOVIET JOURNAL

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BOOK AND RECORD REVIEWS

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Journal of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR

An Artist's Tour—Siberia and Moscow

Maurice Hussey

The author, a member of the Society of Friends, visited Siberia and Moscow in the summer of 1958. In this article she gives her impressions of Irkutsk, where she was the first British woman visitor for many years, and of the art galleries of Moscow.

IRKUTSK station slowly vanished as, hugging an enormous bunch of Siberian forest flowers, I leaned out of the train to wave goodbye to my new Siberian friends, and my guide-interpreter who was returning on the next plane to Moscow. I was on my way to Peking, travelling through Siberia and Manchuria by train.

I was told that I had been the first British woman tourist to make a stay in Irkutsk, and the young woman head of the English section of the Foreign Languages Institute for Siberia had come to see me off, and presented me with the lovely flowers. The day before, my voice was recorded reading a Shakespeare sonnet and a passage from Dickens, and making a little impromptu speech to a group of students who were quite speechless with interest at seeing and hearing a British woman for the first time (though the woman had visited England early this year as a member of a teachers' exchange group). When eventually the students lost their shyness and spoke to me, I found their accent surprisingly good.

The Siberian landscape slipped by, with gay-looking forests sprinkled with birch trees and other delicate foliage, great rolling stretches of agricultural land, reminding me of England (so green, and groups of fine trees here and there), but, of course, like everything in Russia, on a vast scale, difficult for us in our little island to imagine.

Memories of my five days in Irkutsk jostled each other in my mind—or was it six days? I had flown there from Moscow in a TU 104 jet in six hours, losing a night somehow with the speed; and it had been strange, looking out of the plane, to see black night on one side and day on the other. The plane was very steady and without noise. My guide and I had passed the time by singing songs together; our repertoire had included *Ave Maria*, the *Volga Boat Song*, and *Tipperary*!

Irkutsk itself had dusty roads, and fine old wooden houses with beautiful carving around the windows, but looking ramshackle and unsteady. Work was being done on the roads, and by my next visit I expect they will be modernised. Russians put first things first, and I admired the nice little new town beside the hydro-electric power station which is being built very rapidly and will soon be completed. The electrification of Siberia is the first goal, and everything will follow from that. I visited the Russian orthodox church, and found a service being held. In the graveyard of the church I looked at the graves of the Decembrists: early revolutionaries, some of them titled people, who had been exiled there for life in the nineteenth century. These graves had signs of recent restoration. I visited a tea-packing factory, and proved I had ability as a tea-taster! The tea comes from Georgia, and has a delicious mellow flavour quite unlike any other I know. Georgia also exports its traditional men's shirts with a strip of solid embroidery round the neck and down the front, and there were quite a lot of them to be seen in Irkutsk. Russian men look very handsome in these shirts. I was shown some of the

revolutionary history of Siberia in the museum, where there was a model of the house where the secret printing of Lenin's paper *Iskra* took place. Terrible things happened both then and later ; I was shown the picture of one of the revolutionaries who was burnt alive in the engine of a train by the Japanese and Russian Whites.

A happier memory was driving through ninety miles of forest with its lovely flowers and occasional log-hut settlements, resembling Canadian ones I imagine, till I reached the great Lake Baikal. There I lunched with the chief fisherman, the chairman of a fishing co-operative. The menu included two fish to be found nowhere else in the world. My host told me exciting tales of the life they lead. There are bears and other wild animals in the forest, but they do not often come near human habitations. However, a couple of years ago a bear took a swim in the lake near the village ! The men round Lake Baikal are as tough as they look, and near Christmas it is a custom to break the thick ice and have a dip ! They are proud of their fine lake, but, said my host courteously, with a barely perceptible twinkle in his eye, "England is a little bigger I believe." He told me he liked our literature, and especially enjoyed Shakespeare.

Another experience in Siberia was a visit to a large collective farm. I heard that their income is four times as much as in 1950, and looking into several houses I saw pleasant touches such as fine lace on pillow covers and table cloths. I noticed an ikon in one house. I remembered with satisfaction my visit to a dingy hall packed with people—with satisfaction because only friends let you into the back kitchen when it is dingy and awaiting a coat of paint ! A film was being shown. An English Air Force man, surprisingly well acted by a Russian (I thought he was English !), is shot down in enemy-occupied Russia.* A Soviet woman hides him from the Nazis and nurses him to health. He returns to England, marries, and then comes back to visit the site of his war-time experiences as a tourist. The scenes in England are accurate, making our better standard of living perfectly obvious, yet the sympathy of the audience for the British hero was not handicapped by this I noticed. It was easy to tell from the little murmurs at exciting points that friendliness between Russians and British people was as close to the hearts of the audience as it was to that of the producer.

In spite of these reminiscences the two-day train journey to the Chinese border passed slowly. The sleeping-car attendant and the guard, the latter a big tough-looking man, were very kind and helpful. I talked to a Russian woman going to join her husband, who had a job in China. Her little girl amused herself chasing what appeared to be the only fly in the train ! Another woman was going to a job in China, as an engineer.

I noticed when she alighted the next day that she had put on a very smart little hat to face the welcoming deputation. Then there was the man who was visiting his mother in Ulan Ude. After we had had a long chat, and had made friends, he said with the amiable mockery of one friend to another : "And where are your Sputniks ? We keep looking in the sky and see only ours ! We are waiting for you to join us." Practically Mr. Khrushchev's words, and obviously enjoyed by a Siberian.

The second day the landscape looked bare, stretching away in all directions to infinity, and I spent my time writing letters. At the frontier I queued with the others to hand in my passport, and then looked for the Intourist office. The representative did not speak English, but my Russian was good enough for me to understand that at this border, too, one could not take out roubles. I used them all up at the bookstall, and on stamps, which I could use on my

* *The Heart Has Its Memory*. See ASJ, XVIII, 3, Autumn 1957, for an account of the shooting of this film—"Film Unit on Location," by Ralph Parker.

return journey, and then found that the train had disappeared for a couple of hours! The restaurant looked terribly inviting; I searched round my bag, and found enough kopecks for a cup of tea. When I told the nice waitress, miserably, that I could not afford any cakes, she said "Nichevo" and brought me some, and later on saw to it that I had my second cup of tea. When I eventually got back to my compartment in the train, the Soviet customs officers soon turned up and were most happily surprised to find that I had solved the problem of dealing with me by filling in my declaration form in Russian.

My adventurous six-week stay in China is a story in itself. When passing through Manchuria in the train I watched a "farewell" to a Russian family, presumably going home after working there a couple of years. The extremely happy relations between the Russians and their Chinese colleagues were pleasant to watch. It was more like a farewell to one of a family going on a long journey, with last-minute messages being called out, and laughter and embraces that seemed close to tears. Later I met some more Russians, this time on a boat sailing up the Yangtze, when the only other travellers from outside China besides myself were two Russians with their wives and babies.

* * *

HAVING seen for myself the amazing advances being made in China I set off on my return journey by TU 104 from Pekin to Moscow, where I stayed a month to do some portrait-sketches and spend some more time in the galleries and exhibitions. The Pushkin Gallery had an exhibition of priceless treasures and pictures that were being returned to Germany. Holbein, Raphael and Vlaminck were among those represented.

I examined the paintings in the Tretyakov Gallery more closely than on previous visits. They are difficult to enjoy because the walls are overcrowded, and I longed to rehang them so that they would show to advantage. Few critics seem to have grasped the rich and expressive colour contained in Russian painting. Because so many represent history, or illustrate some incident, they seem to have dulled foreign appreciation; but many are a great deal more than technically competent. It is, however, in draughtsmanship, sculpture and portraits that the Russians excel. I particularly enjoyed a one-man show of the work of Nikolai Andreev (1873-1932) and found his pencil and chalk portraits of the well-known men and women of his time quite masterly. He was well known for his fine sculptural busts of Lenin, but I gathered that his collection of drawings had only recently been put on exhibition.

I met a young artist with an extraordinary ability for rapid imaginative sketches illustrating historical and literary subjects; and I had the pleasure of making portrait drawings of a number of distinguished people. These included a Bolshoi singer, a ballerina, a well-known artist, and a middle court judge; also a heart specialist, Dr. Vshnevsky, and a famous actress who at the age of ninety-two has not retired! I drew Prof. Oparin, the biologist, who told me that he had found England very chilly and caused interest by wearing his fur cap there. Mr. Obratsov, the famous puppeteer, was another of my sitters, and I found it fascinating to watch while a production came to life at his direction. The composer Boldreyev also sat for me, and I heard, and much enjoyed, a recording of his *Birth of Hiawatha*.

The height of summer had arrived, and most Moscow people were leaving for the country before I headed for Leningrad and boarded the Soviet ship bound for London, exhausted but content after my voyage of exploration. I looked forward, as a result of my trip, to being able to make Russia seem less remote, and with the help of my drawings and photographs to make people in England able to see and know the Russian people as I had done.

CINEMA AND TELEVISION

Unexplored Possibilities

L. Zolotarevsky and S. Muratov

Is television a new, independent art form? Can cinema and television co-operate or must they always compete? What are television's relations with the theatre? How should television develop? These are questions that are interesting people in every country with television studios. In this article two Soviet writers discuss them in relation to the growing television network of the USSR, now comprising more than fifty studios originating programmes. Their ideas, we think, will interest viewers as well as workers in television, films and the theatre.

TELEVISION is more and more frequently intruding into allied fields—telefilms and teleplays are making an appearance. The question arises: where are the boundaries between these allied arts, what draws them together and how can they help each other?

When a new art appears, or something new in art, it does not immediately define its specific character or find its proper place. At first it lives, as it were, on alien ground, not even suspecting that a new house has already been built for it. Only gradually does the new acquire its own personality, its specific character, and earn the right to an independent existence.

The cinema, as we know, depended in its time on the theatre. In our day many genres of television continue to depend on the theatre, the cinema and similar kinds of entertainment.

Recently many people in the film world have been expressing serious concern about the showing of feature films on television. They believe that this will reduce attendance at cinemas catastrophically. Their anxiety is increased by unfavourable statistics from abroad. The well-known impoverishment of the film when it is shown on television is the greatest cause for alarm.

Measures of an administrative and legal nature are resorted to abroad in order to “protect” the cinema financially: in England, France, the USA and other countries with a well-developed television network, films are either not allowed a showing on television or are shown five years after they have appeared on the cinema screens.

“Protective” measures are being taken in our country as well: films appear on television screens two months after they have been shown in cinemas. Some people say that this period should be increased to six months or even a year. Television organisations are doing everything they can from their side to reduce this period. Such quarrels do not seem to be very fruitful.

Would it not be better to think about which objective features of film-making will determine relations between the cinema and television?



TELEVISION has not, as yet, acquired its own particular means of expression, has not, so to speak, recognised its own specific character. Two years ago

Stanislaw Strnad, director of the Prague television studio, told us in an interview: "At the moment many people are inclined to regard the television service simply as a postman, delivering letters to its many addresses—other kinds of art to which it bears no relation whatsoever." Are we not, in so doing, repeating the mistake of our grandfathers who saw in the early cinema only moving photographs?

The expressiveness of details, the overall effect of general planes, and nuances of light have their full effect when a film is shown on a big screen and, naturally, lose a great deal on the television screen.

Remember the television showing, for example, of *Battleship Potemkin*. The amazing planes, unusually complicated in composition—such as the meeting on the ship (the shot of the deck from above), the famous steps—lose a great deal of their effect, because the participants in the crowd scenes turn into dots and points on the television screen and the details of the composition are simply not visible. For the viewer to see and recognise them it would be necessary to enlarge these planes at least three times (to which the producers would scarcely agree).

Scale is not only a quantitative idea. A great deal is lost when the large mural frescoes of the geniuses of the Renaissance are reproduced on a small canvas.

It is possible to make an exact copy of Michelangelo's "David" so small that it can be put on a glass shelf in your room. But however perfect the copy, the mighty "David" would turn into a toy in such a size. It is possible to make an ideally exact model of the Moscow State University building and place it in the museum of some town or another, but it will no longer be an architectural work of art, and will not give the slightest idea of the true monumental character of the building—even if you indicate the size in big figures.

That is the reason why the small domestic television screen cannot gain the upper hand over the cinema screen. It is similarly naïve to think that the defeat of the cinema will be brought nearer by an increase in the dimensions of the television screen. It must not be forgotten that the processes bringing about an increase in the size of the television screen and the improvement of the cinema screen (stereo-kino, wide-screen, panorama) are developing at a parallel rate, and the cinema is perfecting its own technical possibilities just as quickly as the size of the television screen is growing.

The æsthetic pleasure and deep impression obtained from a good film in a cinema are always immeasurably greater than those obtained from seeing the same film on television. You feel you have got the real thing and not a substitute.

Thus the big screen has the advantage over the small television screen in the showing of pictorial detail and in the reproduction of general planes and crowd scenes.

We heard recently that an experimental model of a wide-screen television set had been made. But this is a venture with unsuitable means, for it is not a question here of height and width (although they have a certain importance), but of the absolute size of the wide screen which makes it possible for the viewer to feel himself in the very thick of the action. This effect cannot be obtained by producing a wide-screen television set. Such a set can be made, in fact, with only one aim in mind: to make it possible for television to show the wide-screen films made for the cinema. The effect of a wide screen is achieved only when the hall is big enough to seat about 1,500 persons.

It has often been said that the wide screen is not very suitable for showing intimate scenes, small buildings and a limited number of characters. There is no disputing this fact. When Masha's tiny room in *The Captain's Daughter* swells to the size of a palace dressing room it seems unnatural. Yet when the

crowd scenes at Pugachev's execution are shown in the same film the wide screen comes into its own. A great many things—landscapes, battle scenes, panoramic views of building sites, hydro-electric power stations, storms—genuinely demand a panoramic or wide screen. Since it is difficult in fact to imagine a feature film in which there were only either chamber or epic sequences, it is therefore logical to suppose that soon the cinema will have an adaptable screen which could be reduced or enlarged according to the nature of the action. This idea is already being expressed by many producers.

In this way the cinema, in our opinion, will not only hold its audience, but in time will diverge farther and farther from television. Feature films made for the cinema screen, from our point of view, are not really suitable for television.

Films are now being made specially for television. There is a view that telefilms on the whole should not differ in any way from ordinary films in scope, dramatic solution, use of means of expression or choice of subject. The main argument advanced is that a number of telefilms can be successfully shown in the cinema. Instances of this have occurred in practice (K. Vornov's film *Two Lives* and, abroad, the American film *Twelve Angry Men*). However, films of this kind are called television films only because their production has been subsidised from the television budget and the screen titles included the words "Commissioned by the ——— Television Studio". (*Mister X* was called a television film, but it was made according to purely cinematographic criteria, to the extent that it included dark shots which reproduce well on a large, well-lit screen but are simply not visible on a television screen.) The film workers made these films using traditional film methods. Moreover, in deciding on the subject of its future films, television sticks to the established ideas of the film world about the genres and forms of film art. The sole concession to "televisionism" is, if you please, that the producer has to a certain extent avoided general planes.

There is still another point of view, which says that the telefilm should be distinguished from an ordinary film by simplicity of production and cheapness. This point of view is uppermost today among television and film workers in capitalist countries. We do not wish to dispute the fact that considerations of an economic nature must and do play a great part here. But in the conditions of capitalist production these considerations entail a nihilistic approach to art, make art dependent on profits, and lead to the emasculation of its æsthetic and intellectual value. In the USA scores of companies are putting on the television screens, as if on a conveyor belt, models of spiritual squalor, vulgarity, amorality and gross lack of taste. These "telefilms" are usually made in series (on an average from thirty to 150 films in each) and reach such a level of standardisation that even in the United States they are giving concern to progressive circles, democratic organisations, schools and the universities. Among these serials may be mentioned *Dragnet* (about the activities of the Los Angeles police department), which is made in the style of the worst naturalistic thrillers. These serials really are distinguished by "simplicity" of production, but they are repulsive films.

Our television will undoubtedly find the best way to make simply produced television serials—but without any such "concessions" in respect of their artistic level.

Soviet and Czechoslovak television and television in the GDR already have experience of producing small, simple films on contemporary themes. Viewers in Prague and Berlin see interesting films and plays on their television screens about construction jobs and industrial workers, about the life of the peasantry, and satirical stories. These studios have their own dramatists (among them popular writers, well known to everyone). The writer Jaroslav Dieth, the

satirist and playwright Franticzek Janura, and others work at the Prague studio.

We believe it is time to consider the question of drawing the great masters of Soviet drama and, in particular, cinema script writers, into the work of Soviet television.

Some television workers suggest that the peculiarities of an ordinary film and one for television are to be explained by the number of viewers. This fact, of course, is important. The history of the cinema provides obvious examples. Here is one such. In the early days of the cinema Otway and Grey Latham, natives of West Virginia, bought a kinetoscope (an apparatus with which only one person could watch moving pictures on a film) from Edison and decided to shoot a scene which would at one and the same time stir all Americans and, when shown, bring in a big profit. Their choice fell on a boxing match. But the two brothers were sadly disappointed; the spectacle which aroused wild excitement in the public sports halls left the solitary viewer, looking at it through the peephole of the kinetoscope, quite indifferent. The Lathams soon realised that the cause lay in underestimating the psychological effect and that certain spectacles require a group of spectators.

It is not even necessary to refer to cinema history. Today anyone working in a cinema knows that the success of a comedy very much depends on the number of people sitting in the hall. A joke or stunt that calls forth a lively reaction from a big audience is sometimes incapable of provoking even a faint smile if the cinema is nearly empty.

An incorrect conclusion is drawn from this: that subjects of an intimate nature require a solitary viewer or a very small audience, and should therefore become the basis of telefilms. This point of view was clearly formulated in the speech made by the English writer Arthur Calder-Marshall at the PEN Club congress on the relations of literature with the cinema, radio and television. Since telecasts are usually watched by three to five persons, Calder-Marshall drew the conclusion that a television production should be a "family", "closely intimate", chamber genre. This could open up new paths for the creative writers, Calder-Marshall said. This point of view is also supported by J. B. Priestley, who has already written several such plays for television.

It is clear that such a solution of the problem unreasonably narrows the objects and possibilities of the telefilm or the television play. We agree with the point of view expressed by the Czechoslovak delegate at the sixteenth session of the annual meeting of member countries of the OIR (International Broadcasting Organisation): "In our experience the viewer, above all, wants to see the dramatisation of definite important events on his television screen, events that have stirred public opinion. This accent on contemporaneity, actuality and especially topicality is preferable to the chamber type of production, which can narrow the possibilities of television too much."

Nevertheless the conference of television workers held in 1956 on "Aesthetics of television" pointed out in its resolution that television will have an intimate family nature.

We report that the intimate psychological genre can and must exist. But it is basically wrong to limit television only to films of this kind. In the first place, the chamber story is highly suitable to the cinema which seats not three to five persons, but 1,000. In the second place, family interests—especially in a socialist society—are immeasurably wider than so-called "family problems."

We may recall a good telefilm, which was a great success with viewers, *The Road to Immortality* (about Julius Fucik). Surely the televiewer felt himself a part of an audience of millions—even if he could not see it—when, before his execution, Fucik says: "People, I loved you. Be on your guard!" And surely the scene in this film when the "Internationale" is sung on May Day,

which is so epic in character (though not in form), comes over at full strength. This example alone rejects outright the claims made for the narrowly intimate nature of the telefilm.

It is correct to raise the question of “chamber form” on television, but it should in no way carry with it a chamber treatment of the subject matter. The telefilm as an art medium should help to express great social themes.

It is essential to discover those forms and genres of transmissions which are capable of resolving present-day themes and of putting the viewers in touch with the public life of the country. As a successful example, we can point to the television talks by satirist S. Narinyani, organised by the literature and drama department of the Central Television Studio. It is just this kind of transmission (but of course not only satirical) that is the strong point of “cinema-broadcasting.”

The cinema film aims at being a finished work of art. The viewer usually takes in a telefilm together with a live report as a newsreel ; for this reason it is better for television plays to be more closely related in form and content to the events of our time.

Use should be made of “small forms” of television. In comparison with a cinema film the usual telefilm or television play has a relatively small number of characters and, as a rule, does not include crowd scenes. A certain limitation of the scene of action is also inevitable. It is important to realise that there the text plays a bigger role in television than on the films, which is partly explained by the fact that the television screen cannot transmit as many pictorial details as the cinema screen. This gives rise to a certain slowness of action, peculiarities of dialogue. The montage in a telefilm must be less detailed than in the cinema.

Many of the conventions adopted in the theatres are alien to television. The conventional scenery is as unsuitable for television as it is for the cinema.

Television will not take theatrical acting from the actor. The fidelity of acting in television is akin to that in the cinema : a forced manner of acting, theatrical make-up and emphatic theatrical gesture are unnatural on the television screen. We remember the transmission of Berthold Brecht’s short play *Teresa Karrar’s Rifles*, from Moscow television. This programme lasted forty-five minutes, which is just what is wanted for a television play or telefilm. There were few characters. That there was a pointed dramatic solution was beyond doubt. Everything, as it were, was absolutely “made for television”. The Vakhtangov Theatre, which was playing *Teresa Karrar’s Rifles*, did everything it could to make it suitable for television, but the director of the television centre did nothing to ensure that the work done by the Vakhtangov company would be successful ! He did not notice the utterly theatrical scenery, which looked false on the television screen. He did not work over the part with the person playing the leading role—an excellent actress who acted in a thoroughly theatrical manner. The rather *outré* manner of acting possible on the stage looks unnatural on the screen of a television set.

The stage in a theatre is three-dimensional. Depth on a television screen, as in the cinema, is illusory. Therefore it is necessary to resolve the movements of the camera and of the actors diagonally in the main, and to make more use of possibilities of foreshortening.

It may be asked why we always couple the telefilm and the television play. It is because there is no fundamental difference between them. In the future all plays should be recorded on film. This will make it easier to control the timing, to avoid accidents and the unpleasant false moves which are at times inevitable in the production of plays.

The telefilm combines some of the peculiarities of the cinema and some

features of the theatre. Because of this television has a marked advantage over both in that it is able to present serials. With serials it is possible to interrupt the action and continue it in the next film or production.



WITH its audience of millions television is just as important a new field of art as the cinema. As an immense source of information television affords the possibility of commenting on and discussing with the viewers all kinds of matters in all spheres of public life. Talks, discussions and interviews are becoming a popular genre in television. The day is not far off when viewers in Moscow will be able to sit in on an interview in which one participant will be, let us say, in Paris and the other in Novosibirsk. Both Muscovites and people living in Vladivostok, etc., will be able to take part in a quiz.

Television is unthinkable without elements of improvisation. It is this that has made the television quiz so popular. Similar programmes exist in every country. We, too, have them, in cinema and theatre. In France they are called "Call to the Public", in the USA "The 100,000 Dollar Question", in the GDR "See, Answer and Laugh", in the GFR "Are You Certain?" and in Italy "Double or Quits". As the titles suggest, these programmes have taken on a clearly commercial colouring in many capitalist countries, since business men quickly realised the enormous possibilities of this type of television production. In capitalist countries these programmes often play on people's baser instincts and do not attempt to widen the viewers' outlook.

These quiz programmes became popular because not only people sitting in the television studio but the viewers as well could take part in the competition, try their luck in a spontaneous game and display their knowledge and wit.

The black-and-white television screen makes it possible to create a genre combining caricature and satiric verse. This kind of programme is shown successfully every week in the GDR, and leading progressive cartoonists from many European countries take part in such programmes, including the well-known Danish artist Herluf Bidstrup. Last year in Moscow we saw a similar programme with Bidstrup as well. In addition, the Moscow television service has often invited the artists A. Bazhenov and M. Abramov, the poet A. Bezymensky and others to appear in this new genre, and they have been very successful.

Television talks and discussion can be illustrated with shots from films. The organic combination of live speech and film may lead to the birth of new genres—purely television in character.

A television programme can be made which would be a kind of sketch (on film) of some event during one day, in one town, house or courtyard. It would be a television "diary". Individual successes on Moscow television should be mentioned, including the magazine "Youth", which tells in an imaginative way whom you are likely to meet on the streets of Moscow. Those who have seen this programme will probably remember for a long time the episode called "His Birthday", which was distinguished by its gentle humour and good taste—this was a short film story about a children's clinic whose hero was an expressive young man one year old.

The short feature and documentary film sketches, such as the Hungarian film *An Autumn Walk through Budapest* (one reel), the Czech film *The Boy and the Dog* (two reels) and the Soviet films *Boulevards and Parks of Moscow*, *Spring Came to Moscow*, *The First Clock* (all one reel) and *The Shortest Distance* (two reels) are all pure television; so too are items in the television magazines "Festival" and "Youth"—lyrical film stories about people we

meet every day : the tram driver, the girl on the river bus, the taxi driver. Unfortunately sketches and stories like these are shown far too seldom.



THE new is born in creative searching, misgivings and, often, torment. But development and consolidation in television can and must be achieved. And this is primarily the duty of those with great experience in the allied arts. Since many television genres are by their nature closest of all to the cinema, it is the duty of our film workers to come to the aid of television. This will be not so much just the aid of the strong to the weak ; television opens up unexpected and exceptionally interesting possibilities for our script writers and film directors.

Here is an opportunity to be daring and to discover something new, unknown to anyone. In the new stage in the development of our country, in the years of carrying out the great seven-year plan, television is becoming even more important as a powerful medium for communist education and for propaganda for advanced experience and the new morality.

Millions of viewers quite rightly look forward to a sharp rise in the ideological and artistic level of the television service, and the realisation of their hopes depends to a great extent on Soviet film workers.

Sovetskoe Kino, 1959, No. 2.

Translated by J.M.W.

RECORD REVIEW

Rimsky - Korsakov : Scheherezade — Symphonic Suite, Op. 35. Soviet State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Rakhlin. (Saga XIX 5012. Price 25/-.)

Chaikovsky : Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35. Leonid Kogan and the Soviet State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Nebolsin. Valse Scherzo, Op. 34. Leonid Kogan and the Soviet State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Gauk. (Saga XIX 5022. Price 25/-.)

Beethoven : Coriolanus Overture.

Mendelssohn : The Hebrides Overture.

Rossini : The Thieving Magpie Overture.

Wagner : The Flying Dutchman Overture. Soviet State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Gauk. (Saga XIX 5014. Price 25/-.)

THE enterprise of Saga Records in producing records of standard Russian and other works performed by leading Soviet artists and orchestras is to be highly commended. The distinguished names on the labels carry their own recommendation, and any criticism can assume a high standard of performance. The overtures, for example, are rendered with authenticity and great care for detail and dynamics. The only thing that can be said against this record is that it leaves a slight impression of dullness, of orthodoxy in

interpretation. But for anyone desiring a standard performance of standard works it can be recommended.

Leonid Kogan is well known to audiences in this country, and personally known to members of SCR. Many people will be glad to be able to obtain his version of the Chaikovsky Concerto, though there are certain shortcomings in this record. The solo instrument at times is too prominent, particularly in the canzonetta, and the volume of his fine tone appears too great. The accompanist sometimes lets the music sag and, particularly in the valse scherzo, seems heavy-handed. The most pleasurable impression is of the verve and polish of the soloist in the last movement of the concerto. This is splendid playing. Incidentally, the labelling of the record is wrong. The canzonetta is at the beginning of side 2.

Rakhlin's interpretation of Scheherezade is altogether admirable. A work that can all too easily seem discursive and episodic is here made to deserve the designation "symphonic". It is built up gradually and with restraint to the climax of coruscating splendour. This record can be taken as a fine example of Russian interpretation of Russian music.

D. T. RICHNELL.

George Meredith in Russia

V. Zakharov

Little has been published about George Meredith's literary connections with Russia. This article is an original study of the subject, making many facts available to the English reader for the first time. The author lectures on English literature at Leningrad University.

I

THAT Meredith had close connections with France, Germany and Italy is well known ; but the extent to which his work was discussed and translated in Russia has not yet been noted by critics outside that country. *Sovremennik*, edited by N. A. Nekrasov, took the lead in familiarising Russian readers with his work as early as 1865. That year saw *Emilia in England* (later called *Sandra Belloni*) in a supplement to the magazine. *Sovremennik* exerted a strong influence on public opinion at the time through its intransigent trend. Chernishevsky, Dobrolyubov and Nekrasov were among its contributors.* *Emilia* appeared in it shortly after its publication in England. The translation was good, and the text of the novel was not abridged. Nekrasov obviously thought a great deal more of it than its critics at home, notably Mrs. Hardman in *The Saturday Review*, Richard Garnett in *The Leader* or Justin McCarthy in *The Westminster Review*.†

In later years Nekrasov and other advanced writers closely watched Meredith's rapid progress as a social realist novelist ; *Beauchamp's Career*, dealing with problems of political life in England after the Crimean war, was translated into Russian and published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski* in 1875, very soon after its appearance in England. *Zapiski*, following the political line of *Sovremennik*, had also been edited by Nekrasov up to that year, when it was taken over by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, the great satirical writer. Both editors considered the novel for publication in the magazine and later on (1876) issued it in book form. Critics noticed it in various Petersburg papers. The *Journal de S. Petersbourg* praised it for its sincerity and feeling, but noted as disagreeable the author's predilection for minute psychological analysis, which made him "neglect the plot, which dwindled into an almost indecipherable story". The *Journal* also commended the translator for rendering into decent Russian "a sophisticated writer whose style is exquisite as well as abstruse".‡

Five years later the same paper returned to the subject of Meredith's novels in a series of articles written by André Raffalovitch (b. 1864), who, though a British citizen, belonged to a well-known family of Russian extraction then residing mostly in Paris. André's brother, Arthur Raffalovitch (1853-1921), was a prominent economist whose name was well known through such works as *La nouvelle loi sur les sociétés anonymes en Allemagne* (1894), *La ligue pour la defence de la liberté et de la propriété en Angleterre* (1886) and *La*

* In 1866 the Czarist government discontinued its further publication for good.

† J. Lindsay, *George Meredith* (1955), pp. 146-7.

‡ M. K. Tsebrikova (1835-1917), authoress and teacher. In 1892 she was deported from the capital for anti-government propaganda. Wrote a number of essays, e.g. *Dickens in Childhood*, *American Women in the XVIII Century*, etc.

crise de Londres (1890), works which even now are of admitted scientific value.

André's ambitions, however, lay in another direction. He mostly wrote poetry in English and made a habit of asking the opinion of outstanding literary figures on giving birth to a new volume. His works included *Cyril and Lionel* (1884), *Is Fancy Dress?* (1886), *It Is Thyself: Poems* (1889), and then two novels: *Raffan's Folk* (1891) and *Self-Seekers, A Novel of Manners* (1897)—very mediocre books, although once benevolently noticed by J. J. Weiss in the *Journal des Débats*. In 1881 Raffalovitch contacted Meredith and made it clear that he would like to start a correspondence with the master, whose works had ever been "a source of rare pleasure to him".

Late in December Meredith commented on his new admirer in a letter to Maxse: "I have had curious letters from a Russian, who has written on my books in the *Journal de S. Petersbourg* and the *Gaulois*: a M. André Raffalovitch. Is it perchance you who have put him on me?"*

Still, Raffalovitch got a cordial reply. Meredith wrote in his usual lightly humorous vein with touches of bitter irony coming through here and there: "I venture to judge by your name that you are at most but half English. I can consequently believe in the feeling you express for the work of an unpopular writer. Otherwise one would incline to be sceptical, for the English are given to practical jokes, and to stir up the vanity of authors who are supposed to languish in the shade amuses them. There is *en revanche* great enthusiasm for the popular. . . . Your appreciation of my work does me honour, but when I think of your wasting time in the effort to make my work widely known I am distressed. Good work has a chance to be recognised in the end, and if not, what does it matter? The only concern one should have is for the personal assurance that one has done one's best."*

In May Meredith thanked his correspondent for the articles in the *Journal*.† They dealt mainly with the psychological side of Meredith's novels and gave a rather vague notion of the writer's method of depicting reality. Raffalovitch had practically nothing to say on the problem of what we now call Meredith's discovery of new horizons in the art of the English novel. Both articles were, however, meant for an audience almost wholly unaware of Meredith's existence, and their sole aim was to supply information. Amateurish as they were, they were in effect the first commentary on Meredith's works in Russia.

Both opened with some caustic remarks on Zolaism and the naturalistic tendency in contemporary French fiction. Meredith's realism, on the contrary, was, to the critic's mind, "not a paradox that vainly flaunts the name of reality, still less a naturalistic banality incessantly invoking science . . . this [realism] is rather a close unity of exact knowledge of things and of winged imagination; a sort of analysis transfigured by a poetical vision of the world". To the detriment of George Eliot's talent the critic drew a parallel between the two great contemporaries. "Meredith's superiority is incontestable, inasmuch as Eliot's imagination is not free . . . thwarted by the unwelcome intrusions of science."

In his second article Raffalovitch noted with obvious satisfaction "*la chute de M. Emile Zola dans le boubier [sic!] de Pot-Bouille*, which clearly indicates that naturalism is equally as far from reality as from plain decency". Meredith's advantage over the *soi-disant réalistes* was that "he could never be satisfied with mere gliding over the surface of things, but tended to penetrate their essence. . . . He had a great predilection for complex characters, exceptional yet real". Finally, he possessed "the same acuity of vision that

* *Letters*, I p. 326.

† They were published respectively in 1881 Dec. 1 (13) and in 1882 Apr. 24 (May 6).

only his great predecessors—Dickens, Balzac, Stendhal—could boast of. . . . Stendhal's influence may be, to some extent, traced in *Vittoria*, which immediately brings to mind *La Chartreuse de Parme*, an inspired panorama of Italy half a century ago”.

Early in 1885 Meredith was asked by his correspondent to comment on *Cyril and Lionel*, which was dedicated to him. His reply was rather brief: “The impression left is of pot-pourri in an exquisite jar”. He advised the young poet “to set his mind on Earth and Life; the two perpetually inter-shuffling”. “Observe”, he advised, “write but to tear to strips for a time.”*

The correspondence lingered on till 1885, Meredith evincing no great desire to encourage his too ardent admirer to a closer contact.† More than once he declined, on the pretext of indisposition or his wife's illness, Raffalovitch's pressing invitations to visit him in London. The young poet evidently tried every possible means to lure the master. Once he promised him the society of “a charming young lady of brilliant wit”, yet Meredith withstood the temptation: “I would come, without one of the fairest of the daughters of Venus to attract, had I the common stability of men at this moment.”‡ After 1885 we hear no more of their relations.

II

NEXT we come to two interesting documents from the archives of the Institute of Russian Literature (*Pushkinskii dom*) in Leningrad. These are two hitherto unpublished letters of Meredith to O. A. Novikova (1840-1925), who wrote on Russian foreign policy, mostly dealing with Anglo-Russian relations. She became well known abroad in the Eighties, having published several serious works on various topics of current political life. Among them worth mention are: *Is Russia Wrong?* (1878), *Friends or Foes?* (1879), *Russia and England, a Protestant and an Appeal* (1880), and lastly *Skobelev and the Slavonic Cause* (1884), the book that gave rise to an exchange of letters between Meredith and herself. Evidently she forwarded him the book in 1885 and received an almost immediate reply.¶

In this letter Meredith praised the book, adding that he admired the warrior and regretted the loss to his country and to history. He declared his warm feelings towards Russia, shared by all, he commented, who, like himself, “belong to the Celtic race which is at home with Slavic”.

Next he dealt with his own works, calling *The Shaving of Shagpat* “an oriental burlesque, middling poetical”; *Evan Harrington* “a rough comedy”. *Beauchamp's Career* and *The Egoist* were “readable though the English find them hard”. *Sandra Belloni* was “a story of a singer of genius . . . bent on scaling society to escape from vulgarity of her class”. Of particular interest is his final remark on “a new work of Dostoevsky in a French translation”. Probably he meant *Crime and Punishment*, translated into French by V. Derély and published in 1884. He said that he had seen “a great eulogy” of it.§

* *Letters* II, p. 365.

† Two letters, however, are worth mentioning here. Meredith discusses Carlyle in one of them (1882, May 23); the other (April 8) explains Vernon Whitford in *The Egoist* (he has much in common, Meredith says, with his friend Leslie Stephen).

‡ *Letters* II, p. 365.

¶ Dated January 16, 1886.

§ Let the reader be reminded that he could not have seen Vogüé's *Le roman russe* as yet; neither had he at the time read much of Dostoevsky, whose best works were still unknown in England. Thus, he was one of the first English writers who recognized the great Russian master.

The second letter is of less importance.* Enclosed with it were a newspaper cutting (*The Pall Mall Gazette*, May 1, 1885) and a brief note explaining the meaning of the appendix, which contains a sonnet entitled *On the Danger of War*, appealing to High Wisdom in a moment of crisis. The poem was printed in the paper at the time when, as Meredith puts it, "O. A. Novikova and the Editor . . . were striving to bring about an understanding between Russia and England hands on hilts", i.e. in March-April of the previous year (1885) during the prolonged dispute over the Afghan border which disturbed Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations. The two countries were then, using Lenin's expression, "within a hairbreadth" of a new war. Meredith wrote to Maxse in April 1885 :

"All our morning papers write as in a clamour of madness. I do fear that they influence the Ministry, though the latter seem wiser. But if they secure the state of peace, you will have a good liberal card at the elections when you point at the ravings of the Tory press for war. I look at the telegrams each morning with apprehension—so insensate has the nation become. Once in for it, where will it stop ! And a cause at best doubtful, with weak arms and no idea where to strike ! There are times when I feel the curse of an impotent voice."†

The sonnet is characteristic of the weaker side of Meredith's poetic diction. It couches sober reasoning in large epithets and metaphors, with periphrases full of symbolic meaning, so that the general impression is of a rather mannered declamation.

Avert, High Wisdom, never vainly woo'd,
This threat of War that shows a land brain-sick,
When nations gain the pitch where rhetoric
Seems reason they are ripe for cannon's food.
Dark looms the issue though the cause be good,
But with the doubt 'tis our old devil's trick.
O now the down-slope of the lunatic
Illumine lest we redden of that blood.
For not since man in his first view of thee
Ascended to the heavens giving sign
Within him of deep sky and sounded sea,
Did he unforfeiting thy laws transgress ;
In peril of his blood his ears incline
To drums whose loudness is their emptiness.

In the letter he admits that the poem is "of small worth poetically", written, as it were, "on the spur of the moment". "It might please you to think", he adds, "that we were of one mind in those days."

III

A SHORT critical essay signed F.U.‡ under the title of *The Modern English Novel* appeared in *Izvyashchnaya literatura* in February 1884. *Literatura*, edited by P. I. Veinberg¶ in Petersburg, went in for works by modern European authors, with brief data on their biographies, best-known books, and literary schools. The article in question enumerated several contemporary English men

* Dated January 28 of the same year.

† *Letters II*, p. 367 (Apr. 28, 1885).

‡ F.U.—Fyodor Nikolayevitch Ustryalov (1836-1885), critic and translator. Translated *Macbeth* (1861), wrote articles on western classics.

¶ P.I. Veinberg (1831-1908), another leading critic, poet and translator of Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine. Edited at various times several Petersburg literary magazines.

and women of letters; Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins, in the critic's opinion, ranked high in a class by themselves. F.U. then pointed out a group of second-class authors (Meredith, Mrs. Oliphant, Walter Besant) whose reputation, he deemed, was strong enough to excite the interest of the Russian reading public. Then followed "a phalanx" of mediocre writers like Ouida, Mrs. Wood and R. L. Stevenson (!), none of whom "will ever rightfully enter the mind of an educated man like the above-mentioned five". F.U. told the reader that Meredith could never fulfil what was in his power to accomplish. "He has always narrated events never witnessed by him, and described things he never laid eyes on." Yet, F.U. argued, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Emilia in England* remained unsurpassed by any living novelist, though the rest of Meredith's production was much inferior to those two masterpieces. He had made no progress since the beginning of his career; yet were he to produce a work of genius now no one would be surprised. He penetrated the human heart, talked riddles to his readers, sometimes perplexing them with unusually clever remarks on life, death and nature; often gave vent to his malignant humour and derided conventionalities and bourgeois morals. But reading his books one was constantly aware of his major defects, i.e. high-flown imagery, abstract figures of still-born heroes, abstruse reasoning and what might be called a deliberate but quite useless obscurity of style . . . *Beauchamp's Career*, for example, was the most tedious of his works. . . . In fine, he is a great novelist averse to writing good novels."

F.U.'s severe criticism of Meredith, the first of its kind in Russia, certainly echoed the writings of his adversaries at home who would not recognise him on the ground of his "hardness".

IV

THE cult of Meredith, slowly but steadily rising in England since the early Eighties, reached its climax by the end of the century. It was with feelings of mixed surprise and genuine enthusiasm that the European critics rediscovered this remarkable genius, whose works of great social impact had been largely ignored for some twenty years, but who now was emerging triumphantly to assert his right to the reputation of a great writer. And the moment had never been more appropriate for him. Public opinion in Europe was growing indignant with British colonial activities in Africa and the East; and the loudest outcry, naturally, came from those countries (France, Germany, Russia) which were Britain's rivals in the world market. Meredith was then pointed to as one of the few honest English authors who denounced the corrupted Victorian society, criticising it "from inside". In *The Egoist* he had made a laughing stock of the ideal English gentleman, the nation's chosen flower, the receptacle of the primordial national pride and selfish instinct. *The Egoist* was thus relied upon as the writer's credo, showing his talent in full maturity. Opinions did not vary on this point.

A Russian version of the novel was published in 1894 by Zinaida Vengerova, whose name is justly associated with the very beginnings of English studies in this country.* She undertook a difficult job in rendering into a foreign tongue the "hardest" of Meredith's novels; and evidently she did not feel adequate to it, for she left out several chapters of the novel, including "The Prelude."

Three years later Vengerova published a number of essays collected under

* Z. A. Vengerova (b. 1867), authoress and literary critic. Translated into English some posthumous works of Tolstoy; contributed a chapter on Russian critics to W. Knight's *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*. Her brother, Prof. S. A. Vengerov (1855-1920), was famous for his studies in Russian literature.

the title *Literary Portraits*.^{*} This book comprised biographies of more than twenty foreign authors of the nineteenth century, including Wilde, D. G. Rossetti and other pre-Raphaelites, Browning and Meredith. The latter was unequivocally called an epoch-making writer and the founder of a new literary school.

Vengerova began by pointing out two rather antagonistic trends in modern English fiction dating back to 1859, when two young authors had brought out their first books, *Adam Bede* and *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. Since then George Eliot had succeeded in placing herself at the head of the first movement, Meredith struggling in obscurity. Depicting clearly delineated types rather than exploring the inmost recesses of the human soul, Eliot had created the so-called novel of morals and manners. Her main conflict is that of the supreme duty resisting the sweet invitations of our five senses. Her heroes are judged not by their motives but in the light of the simple catechism professed by a village parson. There is no third grade between the virtuous and the wicked in her books, and she is obviously more lenient to the former. The Victorians liked her novels, as they were in keeping with the general ethic of the epoch. A prolific writer, she gave rise to a school of gifted authors keen on portraying morals and manners and so forth.

Meredith was spiritually antagonistic to Eliot's favourite paradise of unsophisticated labourers. His books were not fiction in its proper sense. In them clever argument generally superseded what had long been thought to be an indispensable attribute of a story, viz. a plot, a good and plausible invention meant to intrigue or amuse the reader. Meredith was too preoccupied with revealing the intellectual side of each phenomenon he dealt with to achieve an easy contact with the person whose attention and interest he claimed, while he was too critical of the notorious Victorian ideals to be favoured by their worshippers. He never flattered or even duly respected his reader; that too could help in promoting his reputation. And yet Eliot had never been a mystery to anybody; nowadays critics are no longer interested in her shallow sentiments; whereas Meredith could ever delight his biographers and commentators with no end of clever paradoxes. What he really had founded was the entirely new school of the "introspective novel", very much like drama where characters are mostly contrasted according to their motivations. He would not hear of literary types but suggested that strong personalities guided by a single instinct should be put in their place. He cared much about such subtle things as the origin of a human volition and the transitional period when that fatal volition was growing into a conscious act.

Vengerova did not consider the social impact of Meredith's works, mainly dwelling on his technique. She was inclined to explain many of his whimsicalities as due to the influence of Jean-Paul and Carlyle. She then called him "a solitary thinker" bent on scrutinising seemingly unimportant links and connections between nature and man. Impartiality and disgust for compromises, however small they might be, were his only guiding principles; he was indignant with evil or pleased with virtue. He was infinitely far from the little weaknesses and foibles of ordinary men, and manifestly despised them. And yet he was neither pessimistic nor cynical; on the contrary, he was merely a lover of illusory situations where characters act not by mixed impulses of heart and mind but by reason only, which is his absolute. Given to philosophy and never loath to talk it, in this respect he could surpass Sterne if put to it. A modest man, he seldom talked philosophy himself, but made his characters do so.

Of particular interest were Vengerova's observations on Meredith's approach to reality. His realism being taken for granted, she saw that he certainly set

^{*} Z. A. Vengerova. *Literaturnye kharakteristiki*. 2 t., SPB 1897.

himself against anything metaphysical in his works. The dramatic situations deepest in his novels were not necessitated by a conflict between man's impulses and the abstract ideas that constitute his inner world. A duality in man's nature was the starting-point of his psychological explorations; yet his favourite conflicts were not those of soul and body in their eternal antagonism, still less those of death and life in man. Indeed, whatever those conflicts might be, he was primarily concerned with the individual's protest against the conventionalities of bourgeois society, which ran counter to the precepts of Mother Earth. Man's false ideals, his innumerable prejudices and superstitions, invariably led him to a conflict with nature, which ultimately emerged victorious. This was the pith and essence of Meredith's outlook so well expressed in his best works.

Vengerova further emphasised the writer's infinite belief in the power of reason, which was man's only guide in the maze of his passions, which threatened to destroy his integral self. (Yet she failed to notice how naïve and inadequate his old-fashioned rationalism looked when confronted with the grim reality of late Victorian England. The theory of the intellectual perfectibility of mankind, implying a spiritual catharsis through irresistible invocations of reason, as put forward in *An Essay on Comedy*, was the weakest point of his philosophy. Vengerova also never mentioned his scathing criticism of the cash-nexus relations which did much to atone for his inadequate philosophy. The Meredith mercilessly deriding Sir Willoughby Patterne in his shrine was no liberal and certainly did not side with the Meredith of the essay. Yet the critic made the egoist a monolithic and powerful, though pathetic, figure whose tragedy was that of a strong personality in the world of gnomes.)

In 1912 Vengerova's essay was reprinted in a new edition of *The Egoist* designed to start a series entitled *The Complete Works of George Meredith*. The war unfortunately frustrated this promising enterprise.*

V

ECHOES of Meredith's increasing fame at home had again reached Russia in 1905. This time a London correspondent of *Russkoe bogatstvo*, edited by V. G. Korolenko in Petersburg, published a series of letters to the paper in book form under the title *English Silhouettes*.† The correspondent, I. V. Shklovsky (b. 1865), writing under the pen-name of Dineo, was a liberal, once siding with *Narodnaya Volya*, an ardent observer of English life and a quite gifted journalist. His education being imperfect, he made the best of his sparkling style, though it often served as a poor substitute for a precise knowledge of things, which he obviously lacked; and he was never sure of his political views. A regular hotch-potch of names and events, his essays presented a superficial and somewhat unintelligent, though amusing, review of what people were talking about in Britain. The Derby and London fire brigades, Bernard Shaw and English humour, Father Christmas and Meredith equally attracted his never-too-steady attention, resulting in a set of spirited but eclectic descriptions. The man's remarkable volubility probably annoyed readers, as more than once he was delicately alluded to in the press as "the enthusiastic chatter-box".

* A very imperfect translation of *The Tragic Comedian* (1912) may be mentioned here as well. M. Verbitskaya, the translator, took more interest in Lassalle's dramatic biography than in the English author himself. Her only remark on him in the preface stressed his "hardness" and the many difficulties confronting the translator.

An Amazing Marriage was reviewed earlier (1897) in *Severnyi vestnik* in an article by Aug. Filon (author of *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, 1883), reprinted from *Cosmopolis* No. 1 of the same year. Filon called Meredith original and subtle, adding that he could lead his reader wherever he pleased by force of his "wild" imagination.

† Dineo. *Angliiskie siluety*. SPB, 1905.

His opinion of Meredith, then the most popular writer in Britain, naturally coincided with that expressed by the master's early critics and biographers, such as Le Gallienne, W. Jerrold or Hannah Lynch. He merely repeated truisms already stated or recently launched calumnies ; but still he threw light on some aspects of Meredith's work and political outlook still unknown abroad.

Thus, he noted the writer's staunch opposition to jingoism and imperialist propaganda in England, his vigorous contempt of any form of chauvinism. And not wholly uninteresting was his definition of Meredith's talent, which, he deemed, was to all intents and purposes purely synthetic. "By means of a synthesis the master collects infinitely small traits of human character and then cleverly joins them together, thus creating a new type which is still to be born, or a vision of a land (in *The Shaving of Shagpat*, for instance) he had never visited."* The essay ended by predicting for Meredith immortal glory, which he was to share with Dickens, Thackeray and other great men of England.

VI

1905 saw a revival of the revolutionary emotions of Meredith's youth. He greeted the Russian revolution as calling forth the spirit of freedom dear to all oppressed nations throughout the world. After Red Sunday he said in an interview : "Russia cannot, it is certain, long escape the spirit of liberalism that has swept over Europe. The sympathy of the British people with the brave fellows who are fighting an uneven, almost hopeless, battle, as it seems, is very great. And it should be practical. Everybody should spare what he can, and the money should be telegraphed at once to one of the leaders who are not in prison. We must help them and this is the only way. They cannot expect much help from Germany. Germany ever since 1870 has been an armed camp. . . . But no doubt the German people will sympathise with these poor fellows. . . . [In France] people were attracted by the undeveloped riches of Russia to invest their money in that country. And France has her bondholders to consider . . . but she has a great spirit of humanity . . . and the French people also will have much sympathy with the aims of the Russian revolutionaries."† And indeed he took an active part in supporting this noble cause.

His warm feelings towards the people of Russia were well expressed in his poem *The Crisis*, written in the same year :

Spirit of Russia, now has come
The day when thou canst not be dumb.
Around thee foams the torrent tide,
Above thee its fell fountain, Pride.
The senseless rock awaits thy word
To crumble ; shall it be unheard ?
Thy land 'twixt flame and darkness heaves,
Showing the blade wherewith Fate cleaves,
If mortals in high courage fail
At the one breath before the gale.
Those rulers in all forms of lust
Who trod thy children down to dust
On the red Sunday know right well
What word for them thy voice would spell
What quick perdition for them weave . . . ‡

He thus appealed to Russia in one of his last poems, pinning his best hopes to the country then awaking to her great future.

* *Ibid.* p. 249.

† Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

‡ *Ibid.*

Moscow Newsletter

YOUNG THEATRE

Robert Daglish

IN May, the Soviet Union's recently formed first student theatre brings its season to a close with the 100th performance of Kohout's drama of modern Czech life, *Such Love*. It will be an important event not only for the Moscow University students who have produced this immensely successful play but for students all over the country, and possibly even for the professional theatre, too; at any rate it is generally acknowledged that the professional production of the same play at the Stanislavsky Drama bears no comparison with the student version. That may be merely a matter of chance—producer's luck, poor casting at the Stanislavsky, or unusual acting ability in a particular university year. It certainly does not mean that student amateurs are necessarily better than professionals. What is important is that the students' undisputed success has assured the spread of the new system, which is part of the Ministry of Culture's plan of decentralisation that has been put into effect over the past year. The other important thing is that, at a time when theatres elsewhere are in difficulties, in Moscow, which supports as many theatres as London and nearly as much television, the theatre, far from closing down, is capable of sending up vigorous new shoots.

Of course there have been plenty of good amateur shows before, but there is an essential difference between the amateur performance of a group of enthusiasts getting together once or twice at some club or House of Culture and the work of a self-supporting amateur company that elects its management and controls its own finances. Admission to amateur performances in the Soviet Union has always been free, the cost of production being borne by the club out of trade union or state funds. The Moscow Student Theatre charges about half ordinary theatre prices for its tickets, pays all its expenses (though not, I imagine, for the university's stage), and its books, student-accounted, show a clear profit of 200,000 roubles for use on future productions. The theatre's director told me that this will provide funds for better scenery, for more professional help and instruction, and for carrying out various plans connected with the theatre's future. These include the sending of a group of students from the company's "drama studio" to Siberia during the vacation, where they will study the life of one of the new towns being built there. The idea of this studio, which is led by the young playwright Mikhail Shatrov, was suggested by Arbuzov's studio of the thirties, which wrote *City at Dawn*, about the building of Komsomolsk. It will be interesting to see what kind of new approach the students of today with twenty years political and industrial development behind them bring to the problems of Siberian construction.

A notice hanging on the door of the Moscow University Students' Club in Herzen Street invites students to join the theatre in any capacity from electrician to playwright; auditions, which are conducted on a competitive basis, can be arranged at 4 p.m. on weekdays. All the ninety-odd members of the company take part in electing the council of eight that runs the theatre. Members come primarily from the arts faculties of the university, but this is partly because the theatre is in the old building of the university; the new engineering and scientific faculties on Lenin Hills may have their own branch of the theatre in the future.

Permanent professional help is confined at present to that of Mikhail Shatrov, whom I have already mentioned, and Rolan Bykov, a young actor from one of Moscow's children's theatres, who is the students' chief producer. Both these enthusiasts give their services free ; but the theatre is already in a position to pay for any professional help it may need in matters of decor, training and so on.

The Students' Theatre can even claim to have helped the professionals. Iya Savinna, the heroine of *Such Love*, who graduated this year as a journalist, has been invited by Lenfilm Studios to play the lead in their new screen version of Chekhov's *Lady with a Dog*.

There is a greater variety of age than one would find in a British university theatre of this kind. Olga Petunina, who has taken over Iya Savinna's part and plays it exquisitely, is not more than eighteen ; she is in her first year as a biology student. On the other hand, E. Tserkover, who brings an exceptional maturity to his part, probably owes much of it to the seven years he spent in the Northern Merchant Fleet ; he came to the university at the age of 26, when ill health forced him to change his profession to journalist.

And so to the play. I took my seat in front of the almost bare, uncurtained stage, little suspecting the intense emotional and moral stress in which I was to spend the next two and a half hours. A rostrum, obviously borrowed from a lecture room, a low bench in the other corner, a ramp projecting into the audience, and that was all. Then the "man in the cloak" appeared on the ramp and explained : "This is not a play, it's a trial. We don't want your applause, we want you to think." He told us what had happened, a story as old as the theatre itself, of a deceived wife, a wavering husband and the woman he loves, Lida Matissova, who finally commits suicide. Nothing could save it from being utterly commonplace but for the all-pervading influence of the "man in the cloak". A strangely human figure for all his superhuman powers, he brings the characters on the stage, makes them react their lives, accuses them, questions them, foresees their subtlest motives, pleads with them, and as it becomes more and more obvious that all are guilty, including the outraged public, he leaves his cloak on the rostrum and becomes a voice that speaks with and for the audience, the "collective conscience of society", as a critic has described him.

The final scene is supremely well done with voice-effects instead of a cinema-projected backcloth, which is a Students' Theatre innovation. Lida is spotlighted on a high step near the footlights and you believe utterly that it is the observation platform of a departing train. The station crowd on the rest of the stage, almost in darkness, begins to chant, and the voices are the sound of the train. Suddenly everyone knows what is going to happen : the chant is a plea to Lida not to jump, it repeats her own doubts, her hopes of a few hours before, the voices of those who have wronged her mingle in the chant with confessions, promises. And at the height of this crescendo—Lida jumps. But even after it has all been re-enacted the indefatigable questioner is not satisfied. He insists on the characters showing what they would have done if they had known how it would all end. "No, no, it's not mysticism", he says. "We all do that, we all go back in our minds to find the point where we took the first wrong step." Lida must begin. She rushes forward joyfully to meet the man who is to betray her. "No, no, you've forgotten—you know what's going to happen. Try again." And again she does the same thing, even more joyfully. "But I love him", she cries in explanation. The "man in the cloak" turns to the audience. "Now you know all the facts. Judge them—if you can."

It is impossible to describe all the subtleties of the argument or to give full praise to the sensitivity and power of the acting ; one can only sum it up subjectively. To me the whole performance rang with a demand for the human

interpretation of socialist doctrine, a refusal to accept any makeshift for the ideals of a socialist society. It is indeed encouraging to learn that theatres with this kind of taste and talent may shortly be springing up in Minsk, Novosibirsk, and other Soviet cities, whose students are already writing to Moscow for advice on how it is done.

While foreign plays have been extremely popular with Soviet students this season (the State Institute of Theatrical Art is doing *A View from the Bridge* as its diploma production, while students of the Art Theatre graduate with Terence Rattigan's *Flare Path*), there has also been a good number of plays by and about young Soviet people. The most impressive of these from the dramatic point of view is certainly Zorya Danovskaya's *Free Craftsmen*, which is published in No. 11 (1958) of the magazine *Teatr*.

After taking a degree in Persian at Moscow University, Danovskaya worked as an editor for a year in Tadjikistan and was then sent by the Komsomol to manage a collective farm club near Moscow. Not long ago she was killed in a motor accident. Her play is obviously a record of her experiences at the farm, but it succeeds in being far more than mere autobiography. With the insight of complete simplicity it lays its finger calmly on a social problem of the times, the tragedy of the jobbing house painters and decorators who still wander happy-go-luckily round the countryside, doing a botched-up job in some remote village, charging double price for it and drinking away the proceeds. Sent off on their wanderings by the war, which destroyed their workshops, they find themselves incapable of settling down again, and the tragedy lies in the fact that all the progress of post-war construction passes them by. Masking their despair under a false bravado, they go on wandering homelessly from village to village, distrusting and distrusted by the communities they can no longer serve.

The tragically early death of a young author of such promise makes Nikolai Pogodin's words about her play all the more impressive: "Perhaps this club manageress from the Moscow region was not seeking for any special situations in life to reflect a tremendous contemporary theme, but a true and deep socialist view of life has given us in the picture of these wandering rural craftsmen the essence of the tragedy and collapse of modern individualism."

Though the phrase "comedies should be serious" has become a slightly battered joke nowadays, the lighter side of the Soviet theatre sometimes gets a very rough handling from the critics. Personally I found the Art Theatre younger members' production of *The Road through Sokolniki* extremely funny and not lacking in perception either. There must be dozens of different types of *stilyaga*, from the rough-housing lout to the rather vague poetically minded chap up from the country who humbly accepts it as the fashion to wear drain-pipe trousers and a beret. This is the type the young playwright Razdolsky takes as his hero, and in showing him the road through Sokolniki he shows us quite a lot of what goes on in an intellectual flat in this oldest of Moscow suburbs. Valya the actress niece finds Alyoshka asleep on a park bench after failing his university entrance, and flippantly suggests that if he needs some temporary accommodation her aunt might take him on as a living-in cook. Alyoshka, always delightfully credulous, accepts the offer, and after nearly startling the schoolmistress aunt out of her wits gets himself taken on. For the rest of the household it is funny enough to have a tame *stilyaga* serving up the dishes, but he in his naïveté provides an equally pertinent commentary on their own lives, and the dialogue crackles along, particularly between Alyoshka and Allochka, the younger niece, beautifully played by N. I. Gulyaeva.

Admittedly there is something rather artificial in the plot, and it is playing up a little to the needs of the moment to pack Alyoshka off to Siberia with

Mikhail, a singularly unconvincing Stakhanovite-type worker, who must go off to a new construction to set an example to the lads while his fiancée, Valya, desperately wants to stay on with her theatre in Moscow. But there is so much else in the play that one can laugh at with the very best feelings towards Soviet life—the scene in which Alyoshka gets a visit from next door's real Mrs. Mop, who wants to have a good old gossip about their respective employers, is a gem. I find myself all on the side of the play and against the critics. There seems to be no criticism that could be of any help whatsoever to this young author, who is still under thirty, in Alexander Lacis's savage attack on the play in *Teatr*. As for discovering by some wild stretch of imagination an association between Alyoshka and Chatsky of Griboyedov's classical *Wit Works Woe*, and then expecting us to exclaim against Razdolsky ("How can one so absurdly twist *Wit Works Woe*?"), I feel it is Lacis who does the twisting. Ironically enough (for I do not think Kochetov himself would have liked this play), this is exactly the technique of distortion for which *Teatr* was attacked in *The Yershov Brothers*.

Although he describes it as "a comic poem", there is a harder core of reasoning in Pogodin's latest work, *Little Student Girl*, at the Mayakovsky. The staging of the production is certainly in the tradition for which Okhlopkov, the theatre's chief producer, has a reputation. There are tricks galore. Chairs slide on to the stage, bearing pipe-smoking, meditative undergraduates; students march back from the virgin lands—out of the audience; a smooth we'll-all-be-wiped-out-by-the-atom-so-come-to-bed-with-me-now-darling type, taking refuge on the balcony because he is afraid of his girl-friend's tough room-mate, dangles from a slab of paste-board, and one is willing to believe it is one of the higher ledges of Moscow University's skyscraper building. The student types are well selected, and after a rather slow start the play gets along cheerfully on the thinnest of boy-loses-girl-finds-girl-again plots.

The performance that I found most interesting was by Mikhail Kozakov, the young actor who took over the theatre's Hamlet season and has been playing it ever since. Here again one has a narrow-trousered, bow-tied dandy who is a good chap underneath it all, but the fact that he is counterpoised to the real cynic and cad gives the conception a greater clarity. Kozakov brings it off with a life-like sensitivity of mood that makes the scene where he is accused of being a *stilyaga* by a weight-lifting son of Georgia, and his own defence of the quick-step ("ideal for one-room flats") against the waltz ("born in the salons of the Austro-Hungarian empire"), both funny and significant. Although the play exposes the really ugly cynicism of the very few, one of its main points is that we should not mistake a little harmless affectation for something far more deadly.

However, at times life can be simpler than the theatre. As we were leaving the play, my friend remarked to me: "This subtilising over *stilyagi* is all very well, but if our Misha goes to see that play he'll think his idiotic hair-do and crooning in front of the mirror are just the thing." But I don't think he will; the distinctions are too well drawn.

Even if these four plays were the only successes of the season (and there are others which there is not space to describe here), no one could complain that the young Soviet theatre is lagging behind. In fact it is at the moment stepping ahead of literature as a whole. Perhaps this is because the theatre, being more dependent than other literary forms on collective effort, responds better than, say, the novel to good conditions.

Surveys and Reviews

TWO GREAT DANCERS

V.K.

I. Vaganova

THE Russian book *Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova** is a most significant and important contribution to the literature on ballet and dance. It contains Vaganova's autobiography, her articles on various questions of ballet, some of her letters, reminiscences, and appreciations by twenty-one of her pupils—"a wreath to her made by their hands"—including Semyonova, Ulanova, Dudinskaya and Plisetskaya; there are also several articles on Vaganova by distinguished Russian writers.

It is impossible to give a review here of every individual contribution, but they are unanimous in their appraisal of Vaganova's achievement as teacher and artist. She was the first to effect a reform of the teaching methods of ballet by creating a unified scientific system.

In their prefaces the Soviet ballet experts Sergeev and Ivanovsky pay a high tribute to Vaganova's work, which has become a basis for the artistic activity of Soviet dancers. Ivanovsky states that although the pre-revolutionary theatre had such brilliant ballerinas as Kshesinskaya, Pavlova, Karsavina and others, they did not possess such exceptional technique of *tours* as Soviet dancers, whose accomplishment in this respect enables them, in Vaganova's opinion, to have perfect control over their bodies in vertiginous rotations and in the most complicated poses of *adagio*. But this is only an example of certain elements of technique. The importance of Vaganova's system is that she taught her pupils to think about every movement, to understand its laws, to control every lever and co-ordinate all parts of the body. Her method requires a correct poise of the torso and back to give absolute freedom of movement. Even perfectly disciplined legs cannot be a substitute for the functions assigned by Vaganova to the back. Vaganova introduced "new arms" into classical dance. Their particular feature is expressiveness. If Fokine was the first to pay attention to arms, his search was crowned only by the success of a talented ballet master, whereas Vaganova's search resulted in a methodical mastery of arms in the general structure of classical dance. Arms help Vaganova's pupils to perform vertiginous *tours*, to soar in the air, to be beautifully held by the partner in aerial "lifts". Vaganova also attaches great importance to the breadth and spaciousness of movement.

Semyonova gives a fascinating account of Vaganova's personality and method. She says that most teachers taught in an old-fashioned manner, without explaining movements, whereas Vaganova made the meaning of every movement clear. She developed skill, quick reactions and co-ordination of movement in her pupils. Her manner of giving lessons was quite new. She used to say that a pose must correspond to the mood, and that arms must draw a design in the air. She demanded simplicity in execution of the dance. She

* *Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova. Stat'i, vospominaniya, materialy.* "Iskusstvo" L-M. 1958. 344 pp. 23r. 30k.

inspired hard work and would not allow the substitution of an easy movement for a difficult one. Semyonova recalls how she learnt, often with tears in her eyes, Vaganova's difficult conception of "spray", conveyed by the play of the hands, for the ballet *The Stream*. In addition to control of the leg muscles and back, Vaganova attached great importance to the development of muscular sensation, which enables the dancer to reproduce a pose without watching it in the mirror. She insisted on the attainment of perfect balance and co-ordination of the body and limbs, and taught how arms maintained balance in transition from one pose to another. Semyonova says that Vaganova cultivated "music" of the body to such a degree that her pupils could perform dances in different rhythm and tempo, conveying various emotional states and musical content. It must be stressed that Vaganova also knew how to develop individual abilities. Her teaching was many-faceted and enabled her pupils to perform various *genres*. All other teachers ceded first place to Vaganova because she convincingly demonstrated the superiority of her methods, which the school gradually adopted. Semyonova describes how Vaganova taught various steps and poses; it seemed to her that no one could surpass the neatness of her *tours*, *aplomb* and her impeccable, unequalled jumps. In Vaganova's opinion, a teacher who is unable to do every movement perfectly himself cannot teach. Vaganova taught that without co-ordination of the arms there can be no correct movements of the entire body from hands to feet. These elements of Vaganova's system, says Semyonova, were a logical development of the best principles of Russian classical dance, generalising and working on the experience of Vaganova's predecessors. Vaganova demanded that the image, emotions and content of the dance should be portrayed by the entire body. "The body is our instrument", and therefore she wanted to make it perfect. In Vaganova's system there was a graduated sequence of artistic development. Pupils were never asked to express emotions which did not correspond to their age.

I must quote literally what Semyonova says about *The Dying Swan* and *Swan Lake* because there has recently been much discussion and argument in England as to how these compositions should be danced and as to the presentation of *Swan Lake* by the Bolshoi Theatre Company.

"I also studied *The Dying Swan* with Vaganova. Fokine put this dance on quite differently from the way it is danced now. The design of the dance and the mood expressed in it were quite different. Saint-Saëns's music does not permit the interpretation of this dance without romantic feeling. In this music there is no "pre-mortal trembling" whatever. Vaganova demanded from me not the agony of the dying swan but the last swan song. I was interpreting the image as it appears in Balmont's poem "The Swan" because I had understood that Fokine was inspired by the same source. Vaganova reminded me that Pavlova, for whom Fokine had put on *The Swan*, had fluid *pas de bourrée*, slow turns of the arms and curves of the body. She appeared with her face, not her back to the audience. The chief thing in her dying swan was perfect *pas de bourrée*, which she, keeping an uninterrupted design of movement, filled with continuously changing expression. In her dance there was an entire gamut of moods, and therefore every time she danced *The Swan* it varied.

"My work on *The Dying Swan* was useful when I began to prepare for *Swan Lake*. Of course, the range of this remarkable Chaikovsky ballet is incomparably vaster than that of Fokine's dance. Chaikovsky's music is full of infinite nuances of feeling. It suggests a broad amplitude of gesture and emotional depth; it is akin to the nature of Russian interpretative art, to our national character. No matter how many times I danced *Swan Lake*, Chaikovsky's music suggested new movements. But I was always guided by Vaganova's advice in my interpretation of the role of Odette and remembered her demand

to unite an impeccable form of classical dance with maximum expressiveness of every movement."

After Semyonova was transferred to the Bolshoi Theatre in 1931 Vaganova continued to give her advice by post. Semyonova studied also with the actors of the Moscow Art Theatre, but for choreographic forms she used to go to Vaganova at Leningrad.

Semyonova says that Vaganova understood the limitations of the pre-revolutionary epoch in which she spent the first half of her life. "What a pity", she said to Semyonova, "we were not young in your time." Semyonova concludes her essay by saying that Vaganova was the first professor of classical dance, i.e. she elevated ballet method to the level of science, but above all she was a great artist. If she had been only a learned pedagogue her pupils could never have revealed themselves as artists.

Ulanova and Vecheslova together wrote a short but very appreciative essay on Vaganova in 1937, fourteen years before her death. They speak of the strict discipline in her class, into which she admitted very few pupils and demanded much from them. Vaganova's lesson was carried on at such a tempo that a pupil once becoming lost would be unable to keep pace with the movements and combinations. Artists who did not belong to her school experienced the same difficulty: they could not catch up with the tempo of Vaganova's pupils. To an outsider it might have seemed, for example, that *adagio* in such a quick tempo was useless, but this was not so. In Vaganova's class a dancer could develop such steadiness and complete mastery over her body that the most difficult steps in quick tempo looked quite easy; but this ease concealed very hard work and technique accumulated during years of systematic exercises. Ulanova and Vecheslova say that variety, inventiveness, most interesting combinations, quick orientation in steps, development of brilliant technique and, above all, the continuous growth of Vaganova's teaching method made her the best teacher in the USSR. These two ballerinas were amazed by Vaganova's rich imagination and daring combinations, which had not even been dreamt of by first-rate teachers in pre-revolutionary days. Now Soviet ballerinas perform without effort steps and jumps that are difficult to male dancers.

Dudinskaya also pays a high tribute to Vaganova. She says Vaganova would not accept "I cannot"; her reply was always "You must". Vaganova would struggle with the natural defects of a pupil, with everything that was an obstacle to freedom of the dance, and she used to get miraculous transformations. She was an enemy of mechanical interpretation. For the sake of beautiful harmony of movements, "intelligent" dance portraying the content, for the sake of art that sings of beauty of the soul, Vaganova created a hard, strict style of lesson, the logical structure of which, incidentally, spared pupils physical injuries common among dancers. Even a non-expert will notice a general style which distinguishes all Soviet dancers. It is most conspicuous in the harmonious plasticity and expressiveness of the arms, the flexibility and steel-like *aplomb* of the torso, and the noble and natural poise of the head; these are distinguishing features of Vaganova's school. Her choreographic grammar enabled her pupils to possess absolute freedom of the dance. It was not fortuitous that the arms, back and head drew Vaganova's special attention. They were the weakest parts in the dance of the preceding generations, and have now become a basic guide to expressive dance. How much work has been done to do away with arms "sticks" and arms "dusters". Arms are an essential element in the technique of the dance. Their intelligent discipline determines the execution of almost all complicated movements and, above all, of *tours*. Assisting in the physical work of technique, arms are also "wings" and means of expression of the finest emotions. "What a tremendous con-

tribution Vaganova's method made to *port de bras* that had been devoid of system and content!" concludes Dudinskaya.

In her essay "Vaganova's lessons in Moscow", Plisetskaya says that before she met Vaganova she only liked dancing, but not working. Vaganova taught her to control muscular sensations; complicated movements which had seemed impossible to Plisetskaya became easily mastered after Vaganova's explanations. Her hitting the target reminded Plisetskaya of the art of great surgeons. If Vaganova said so, the task had to be done; if it was a failure the movement was not done according to Vaganova's instructions. Her explanations were so simple that her pupils were amazed that a solution of the problem had not occurred to them. Pupils who were not very gifted Vaganova could make leading dancers, and talented ones she endowed with a capacity of overcoming any difficulty and creating artistic images with the maximum economy of means.

I have selected contributions only by ballerinas whose names are well known in England, but essays by Vaganova's other pupils are also very interesting. Vaganova's autobiography contains reminiscences of Chaikovsky, Ivanov, Petipa, Cecchetti, Gerdt, Legnani, Fokine, Pavlova, Preobrazhenskaya, Trefilova, Egorova and others. She gives appraisals of her pupils, including an exceptional incident concerning Semyonova, who was sent to her class as a little girl. During the first lesson Semyonova grasped every instruction, and when she came to the middle of the classroom and did *développée à la seconde* Vaganova could hardly suppress an exclamation of delight and was just in time restrained by the *inspectrice* of the school from showing her admiration in front of the pupil.

Vaganova describes Ulanova as a "frail, unearthly being who remained the same after graduation", and "Dudinskaya burns when she creates on the stage".

The book includes a number of Vaganova's articles on various subjects: "What to Do with Ballet", "Where to Find New Themes", "Whether Old Ballet Has Outlived Itself", etc. To the last question she replies: "If we have Blok and Mayakovsky, Stravinsky and Prokofiev, it does not follow that Pushkin, Glinka and Chaikovsky must be forgotten." On the other hand, in her opinion, ballet repertoire must be renovated with the spirit of the times, but the acrobatic element is admissible only if it is based on classical exercise; in support of this agreement she states: "If the Russian school occupies first place in the world and is beyond comparison with all other schools, it owes this to its classical technique, which has reached unprecedented perfection." "In the past", writes Vaganova, "ballet was based on fairy stories, now a realistic approach is required." Being devoid of spoken word, ballet needs maximum plastic expressiveness, which is impossible without perfect control of torso and arms. Equally important is the development of high light jumps. "In other words", states Vaganova, "it is essential to have lightness in the dance."

Very revealing are Vaganova's notes on the pre-revolutionary and Soviet school curriculum and teaching methods. In Czarist Russia there was no definite method of teaching classical dance. Every teacher taught according to his fancy. There were elements of two schools: the French school, which was in decline at the end of the nineteenth century, with its flabbiness of movements and sugary, sweet manners known as "grace"; and the Italian school headed by Cecchetti, which brought great changes because movement became more dynamic—there appeared life in execution, but at the same time there was a certain abruptness, and virtuosity was an aim in itself. Character dances were not taught at all; pupils learned them by watching senior artists on the stage. The history of the dance and ballet was not included in the curriculum. General education was very sketchy. Talented dancers acquired much of their

artistic and general education on their own initiative. After the revolution the entire programme of education, both professional and general, was radically changed. There is a single method of teaching dancing. Vaganova's own contribution to the method has been enormous. It is pertinent to observe here that her book *The Principles of Classical Dance* is only a text-book, and that her actual method of conducting a class can be transmitted to each succeeding generation of teachers only by teachers themselves, in other words by tradition. "Now", says Vaganova, "there are courses in special complementary subjects, such as the history of fine art, the history of ballet, folk and period dances, etc. All this has led to a growth of the culture of ballet artists and of the dance. The establishment of a great number of ballet schools all over the USSR has done away with the dilettantism that flourished in Russian provinces and is still common in other countries."

The last part of the book reviewed contains several articles on Vaganova as a dancer, teacher and ballet mistress. I have to content myself with giving a short review of an article by ballet master Gusev, dealing with Vaganova's method. He mentions, incidentally, how other teachers used to watch her lessons through a keyhole and take notes of her combinations.

In Vaganova's class there were fewer big jumps than in the classes of other teachers, but her pupils received a much better preparation for such jumps because their muscles and ligaments were better trained for this purpose by a series of preliminary exercises. Gusev relates how at an examination Vaganova asked her pupils to do sixteen *fouettés* with turns on *pointes* although they had never been allowed to do them before. During the whole year Vaganova made them do exercises only of *fouettés* without turns. And yet, staggered and frightened though they were, they all passed the examination in *fouettés* with turns. Such is the value of Vaganova's rationalised economy of technique. In her system one and the same technical device serves an entire group of movements. Her lessons were organised on the principle of learning various devices and various ways of using them for different movements. Her pupils had not only to learn these devices but to understand why they were used and why they were the best. It is a perfect knowledge of the best way of executing a certain movement that distinguishes Vaganova's pupils. Even experienced male dancers had difficulties with Vaganova's pupils when they were asked to give a precise and most convenient position to the lady. At first such a request seemed to be a caprice, but later they understood that it was easier to support her in such manner. Gusev says that although expressive plasticity of arms had been cultivated before Vaganova their auxiliary "working" role in making the technique of the dance easier was her technical discovery. It must also be recognised that her method of controlling the torso resulted in steadiness, flexibility, freedom of transition from *en dehors* to *en dedans*, and increase in amplitude of various combinations of broad movements which had previously seemed unattainable. Vaganova attached exceptional significance to the development of strength, endurance and skill. Without these sporting qualities the grace, beauty, plasticity, expressiveness and artistry of a ballerina are an empty sound.

Vaganova's system was dynamic and progressive. When she saw that her pupils could not overcome the difficulties of new movements invented by Lopukhov she introduced acrobatic elements into her lessons, although from an æsthetic point of view she did not accept them as a system of training. Based on classical foundations, these elements have become extremely useful in the duet dance, in co-called "lifts". "Vaganova, a pillar of pure classicism, helping Lopukhov to destroy a divinity!" said some critics. But Vaganova as a great technician of the dance could not remain inactive and fail to seek methods to overcome the new difficulties that arose with further development. She marched in time with the tempo of new life.

II. Plisetskaya in *Swan Lake*

THE Soviet film *Swan Lake* was shot at the Bolshoi Theatre using the production and cast seen in London in 1956 except for the notable difference that Plisetskaya assumes the dual role of Odette-Odile. The film's colours are soft, although not always as clear as they were on the stage at Covent Garden, and the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre is made to appear smaller than it is. But there is none of the blurring that unfortunately marred Paul Czinner's film *Giselle*. Everything is in focus.

The film begins with a tribute to the genius of Chaikovsky. We see his house in Klin, now a museum, and we have glimpses of the Russian landscape. Then follows a brief historical review of the first two productions, with a due emphasis on Ivanov's and Petipa's collaboration in the second. Then a short portrait gallery of ballerinas in the role of Odette-Odile: Karpakova, Pavlova, Geltser, Semyonova, Ulanova and now Plisetskaya. Plisetskaya's appearance, temperament and talent are admirable for the interpretation of the contrasting characters of Odette and Odile.

Chaikovsky's symphonic music with its world of deep feeling, lyrical tenderness, tragic conflicts, broken fidelity and the final triumph of noble ideals over perfidious evil demands a certain departure from classical norms of strict style in the dance. It requires some freedom of form, fine nuances, plasticity of the body, tender softness of arms. Plisetskaya adopts such an expressive style, but does not clash with the exact strictly correct forms of classical dance. In common with other great Russian ballerinas, she has solved the problem of making plastic freedom conform to classical canons.

In *Swan Lake*, *port de bras* must be particularly expressive, and Plisetskaya's arms are a poem. They live, they sing, now spread out, now fluttering, or dropped helplessly as if they were broken wings. She has obviously learnt Vaganova's lesson that "wings grow from the shoulder blades". When Plisetskaya's arms make a broad movement, as if she is about to rise in the air, they look like the wings of a big powerful bird. The illusion is due not only to the amazing suppleness of her shoulder blades, elbows, wrists and fingers, but also to her technical control. The artistic image clearly comes to her as a result of a study of birds' wings in action and the use of her prodigious plasticity according to the logic of style evoked by the music.

The flight of a bird is one of the most beautiful phenomena of nature. It was not for the purpose of aeronautics alone that it preoccupied Leonardo. Dance is an inspired flight, and so it appeared to Pushkin as performed by "the Russian Terpsichore". Plisetskaya does create such airy effect, and there are moments when she gives an impression of inability to raise her "wings" from sheer fatigue and when she folds them in repose. There are equally exquisite moments when she hides her head under the wing or turns it down towards the shoulder in romantic melancholy. In the love duet of the second act we see a woman, but Plisetskaya realises that if a transformation of Odette into a swan occurs every day at dawn it is psychologically inevitable that swan features should become her second nature when she again assumes a human form. Therefore swan nuances are always present in her poetical movements and poses that flow one into another in musical waves consonant with Chaikovsky's symphonic poem. Plisetskaya has organically united effortless technique with artistic expression. Her acting is natural and sincere. As Odile she adopts the traditional character of demonism that gives a sharp contrast to the lyrical tenderness of Odette. Her virtuosity is brilliant in both *adagio* and *allegro*, but it is never virtuosity for its own sake. When in a culmination of *pas d'action* in Act III she scatters glittering black diamonds in a dazzling cascade of

an *enchânement* of *tours*, it is not to astonish the public but to allure the prince. *Brio* is necessary to Odile only as one of the weapons in her feminine arsenal of seductive power.

Plisetskaya's virtuosity is always coloured by feeling and never acquires acrobatic effect. There are no *clichés* in her plastic vocabulary. She adopts her individual manner even in scenes that require traditional interpretation. What diabolical laughter and triumph of spite her Odile displays when she takes off her mask of enchantment and spell!

The continuity of flowing line from her finger-tips to the *pointes*, strong flexible back, co-ordination of all parts of the body, eloquent *arabesques*, spacious amplitude of movement, high light jumps—all bear the stamp of the Russian classical school.

It is unnecessary to speak about Fadeechev's perfection and the impeccable art of the other dancers. Numerous pages have been written about them and about the tremendous impact of the Bolshoi Theatre ballet in general. Appropriately enough, in the intervals between the acts the film shows the public in the foyer, and the museum of the Bolshoi Theatre. Although not all of us are "honourable citizens of the wings" as Pushkin called privileged patrons, we all see Plisetskaya in her dressing room.

But this beautiful film is marred by frequent interruptions of the ballet action during actual performance for the purpose of showing us the audience and its emotional reaction. Especially irritating is a commentary (in English) throughout the length of the film. Surely a short libretto could have been flashed on the screen at the beginning of each act for those who do not know the story of the ballet. Nevertheless, in spite of these flaws the film should be seen by everyone who is not indifferent to beauty.

CENTRAL ASIAN POETRY

I. Uzbek Poetry

Peter Tempest

FOR western readers Uzbek literature is new territory. This anthology of 65 classical and modern Uzbek poems in English translation provides the thrill of discovery.* A land and people glimpsed in photographs or travel notes can at once be experienced in the intimacy of their poetic expression. Past and present come alive.

The struggle for Soviet Uzbekistan? Listen to Hamza, the national poet, assassinated by the class enemy in 1929, when he was 40:

Hey, worker, bear your yoke no longer,
Arise and greet your better days!
Grasp your freedom, hold it stronger,
The end has come to greedy beys!

Or again in another poem addressed to the toiling peasants:

Hear the splashing rain of freedom,
Moisture helps the grain to grow.
Take your plough, prepare it, peasant,
It is time to till and sow!

* *Uzbek Poetry*, Oriental Literature Publishing House, Moscow 1958. 178 pp., 1/9.

The iniquitous past ? Here is Mamarasul Babaev describing a six-year-old “ slave of the loom ” in his poem *The Persian Rug* :

The red rug
and the children as pale as the dead . . .
Has their life-blood
been taken to colour the thread?

The new life ? In his exultant *Great Feast of the Kazakh People* Ghafur Ghulam, the 56-year-old translator of Shakespeare, writes :

One happy family we are, to speak of this
we never tire.
We have one common kettle now, and under it
a common fire.

As one expects, social emancipation and socialist advances have brought rich and varied new themes into Uzbek poetry, themes of socialist construction and Soviet patriotism.

There are moving poems on the death of Lenin, on the murder in 1923 of the first nine Uzbek students bound for the newly established Tashkent University, poems about the war years and the great constructions of Communism.

In his poem *Rivers*, excellently translated by D. Rottenburg, the poet Uigun writes of

Three fair daughters of one mother,
Volga, Dnieper, Amu-Darya. . . .
In the one-time heart of deserts
Wheat and apple-trees will grow,
And the sweetest, coolest waters,
Flowing by unwonted ways,
Will give life to grassy meadows
For uncounted herds to graze.

The ever-fresh theme of love gains new meaning through the centuries. To the fifteenth-century Uzbek poet and enlightener Alisher Navoi :

Love is a lustrous star:
The light of the eyes and the heart's purity
spring from it.

Four hundred years later the classical lyric poet Furqat, the translator of Pushkin, writes :

Love is no pleasure to people if spring grants
no warmth and no light,
If in the steppes no spring flowers weave carpets
to gladden the sight.

While in Soviet times the girl “ with the raven tresses ” watches

. . . the cotton flowering white for miles,
And the gleam of the opening blossoms
Echoes your sunny smiles.

(*The Cotton-Picker*, by Uigun)

Today Uzbek poets, more than ever before, are the voice and consciousness of the people, so much so that Mamarasul Babaev, reciting his poems to soldiers at the front, asks himself afterwards :

Had they been listening, full of rapt attention,
Or was it they who had read their verse to me ?

The publishers are to be congratulated on their initiative in producing this volume, and the translators on their tremendous achievement in rendering the Uzbek originals into highly competent and often inspired English verse.

Useful additions to future editions would be some notes on Uzbek prosody and a glossary of Uzbek terms, as well as more specific biographical informa-

tion about the poets selected. A brief outline of social and economic history would also aid the general reader.

This slim volume is recommended as the shortest route to the sun and the splendour of Soviet Uzbekistan.

II. Rivers

Uigun

THE poet Uigun Atakuziev was born in 1905. He has published four books of poetry—*Springtime Delight*, *Second Book*, *In the Land of the Sun* and *Songs of Autumn*—and has written several plays, including *Song of Life*, *Altyn Kul* and *Novbabor*, and one, in collaboration with I. Sultanov, on the life of the great Uzbek writer Alisher Navoi.

Who can vie with you in beauty,
Three great rivers, sisters three?
Who can match the breadth and fullness
Of your generosity?
By fraternal labour's ties,
In your valleys, from your bounty,
Communism will arise.
Like the peoples of your country,
One great family you are,
Three fair daughters of one mother,
Volga, Dnieper, Amu-Darya.

Watered freely, fields and orchards
Will be still more green and grand,
Multiplying fivefold, tenfold,
The might and glory of the land.
Power plants of Communism,
Flashing on life beacons bright,
Will illumine all our Union
With their vivifying light
So it will be. Renovating
All the country wide and far,
You will flow through man-made channels,
Volga, Dnieper, Amu-Darya!

With a new, redoubled brightness
Will the star-lit Kremlin glow.
In the one-time heart of deserts
Wheat and apple-trees will grow,
And the sweetest, coolest water,
Flowing by unwonted ways,
Will give life to grassy meadows
For uncounted herds to graze.
Drought will be the theme of legends,
People's life no more to mar,
Barred for ever by your waters,
Volga, Dnieper, Amu-Darya.

Lakes and rivers will come nearer,
 Sea to sea will stretch its hand,
 And a net of silver roadways
 Will embrace the Soviet land.
 Thoroughfares of Communism
 Will those shining roads be called.
 They will lead us to the future
 Land of happiness untold.
 Caravans of peace and plenty
 Will come sailing from afar,
 Gently borne along the rivers
 Volga, Dnieper, Amu-Darya!

Where did they receive, those rivers,
 Such unrivalled power and scope?
 Why do all the poets fame them,
 Calling them their pride and hope?
 'Tis the Party's will that makes them
 Follow unaccustomed routes,
 'Tis the Soviet people's labour
 Bringing forth such wondrous fruits:
 It is our fraternal nations
 Make you splendid as you are,
 Our strong hands create your beauty,
 Volga, Dnieper, Amu-Darya!

Translated by David Rottenburg.

III. Kazakh Oral Art

Kutty Hookham

ANY book which gives us a serious introduction to the culture of another people is in general to be welcomed; especially if that people had for long been oppressed and its cultural heritage neglected. The study of the folklore of a people that has made the transition from nomadic herdsmen to socialism more or less at one stride would seem rewarding enough.*

However, despite the interest of the subject, and the sober presentation, the book is from the beginning frustrating. It seems to be directed to that *élite* which knows at once who the Kazakhs are, their history, and where they come from. We, the general public, are dismissed with the information that the "Kazakhs are the most significant tribal group of northern central Asia, speaking one of the eastern Turkic languages" and a footnote to the effect that "since the subject of Kazakh history has been treated amply elsewhere, no details are attempted here".

Still, with atlases at our elbows, and encyclopædias to hand, we may proceed.

After an indifferent sketch of the "Kazakh cultural pattern", the first section on early folklore is a most readable account of the traditional songs, legends and epics which told of the struggle of nomads with natural forces and clashes with other peoples. This folklore was handed down by wandering bards (*aqyns*)—the tradition of which has been carried on to this day.

In the camp-fire heat steppe-wood is burning,
 The roundbacked falcon has dozed off in the saddle,
 And the hunters, forgetting about their aul [family group],
 Tell simple stories . . ."

The bards sang ritual songs for such occasions as births, marriages, deaths,

* *The Oral Art and Literature of the Kazakhs of Russian Central Asia*. Thomas G. Winner. (Duke University Press, USA, 1958, 45/-.)

victories or defeat in battle, and at celebrations (still popular) such as wrestling matches, horse races and games. They described in epic form the merits of a *batyr*, the popular hero. An integral part of these celebrations was the *ajtys*, the competition between bards.

Although stereotyped and repetitive in form, the songs bore a direct link with the lives of the nomads; with, for example, the marriages which were contracted between the parents, the bride being purchased for a "bride-price" and carried off to the *yurt* (tent) of her husband and his family. The bride left her home with a natural reluctance:

A goose swims with the stream in a little brook,
A young woman must now forsake her native home.
If you drip blood into water, the stream will carry it away speedily
And if you are married, a stranger will carry you far away . . .
. . . It is as if you shot me straight in the breast, dear father.
You sold me for a herd of horses, dear father.
You have more room now in the *yurt*, dear father,
And in it there is no room for me any more, dear father.

She was met often with hostility in her new *yurt*:

The sign of an evil wife is
That she knows not the customs,
That she is of evil smell,
And is not good for anything.
She gives you burnt grain,
Saying "Fill your stomach with this."
. . . Her handkerchief hangs fluttering in the wind.
Her pants hang disorderly over her boots,
Her hair sticks out of her hair covering,
And her breasts sag down.

Not until the beginning of the nineteenth century were written records begun of these oral songs and legends. At the same time there developed a vigorous interest in national art, illustrated in the middle of the century by the works of Valikhanov. Oral and written works expressed popular resentment of Czarist oppression.

Only after Soviet power was established did full cultural advance take place for the Kazakh people. Alongside the development of literacy came the introduction of alphabets for those nations which possessed no written language. The difficult and unsuitable Arabic script, used for many Turkic languages, was replaced by a Latin script (in the thirties this was replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet).

The Kazakh people continued to express their lives in song. They celebrated their heroes, like Amangeldy Imamov, leader of the 1916 uprising. Later on they began to celebrate their settlement on the land and collectivisation:

. . . and we, like the cranes, flying in the sky,
Crowded together in our fields.
We ploughed the land. Our blood was boiling.
In the blue spring we turned the virgin soil
With the brown tractors, powerful like the black tulpar [winged horse]
And obedient to the rein.
The work was gay, the work was hard,
But our land became soft and black,
And in torrents we poured, like rich shining rainfall,
The grain, like liquid amber . . .

Perhaps it is wrong to complain of a work which brings within our reach a fragment of this rich folklore. It is not possible without knowing, and knowing well, the Turkic dialects from which they are derived to say how well these

fragments have been translated. We are tempted, however, to ask for more translation and less commentary.

Despite a section dealing with the immense cultural developments in Soviet times, the latter parts of the book are patchy and out of date. The Kazakh national bard Dzamboul, whose life spanned the dramatic century 1846-1945, and whose works have been extensively printed in Kazakh, Russian and other languages of the USSR, receives very summary treatment. Theatre and drama receive a postscript of a few pages ; but opera and drama are already strongly developed, as the recent festival of Kazakh art and drama in Moscow demonstrated (December 1958).

No work in the west can hope to keep fully abreast of the Soviet pace of development, but more effort could have been made to bring up to date material which appears to have been initiated in 1947 and completed in 1952, but not published until 1958.

Perhaps the author, having satisfied his professors with his thesis, had less interest in satisfying the public.

DOSTOEVSKY'S SHORTER WORKS

Poor Folk. Fyodor Dostoevsky, tr. by Lev Navrozov. (FLPH, Moscow. 217 pp. Distributed by Central Books Ltd. 2/6.)

White Nights. Fyodor Dostoevsky, tr. by O. N. Shartse. (FLPH, Moscow. 295 pp., unpriced.) (Contains also **A Faint Heart**, **A Christmas Party and a Wedding**, and **The Little Hero**.)

My Uncle's Dream. Fyodor Dostoevsky, tr. by Ivy Litvinov. (FLPH, Moscow. 405 pp. Distributed by Central Books Ltd. 7/6.) (Contains also **Most Unfortunate** and **The Gambler**.)

Notes from a Dead House. Fyodor Dostoevsky, tr. by L. Navrozov and J. Gural'sky. (FLPH, Moscow. 321 pp., unpriced.)

ALL these shorter works of Dostoevsky have been translated into English before, many of them more than once, and two of them as recently as 1950, in Mr. Magarshack's *A Gentle Creature and Other Stories* (John Lehmann). But copies of these earlier editions are hard to come by, so the new translations listed above are welcome. A perusal of the shorter works is well worth while, both on account of the real pleasure they can give the reader and because a complete idea of Dostoevsky's art cannot be obtained without them: they exhibit the use of realistic techniques very different from those used in the great didactic novels.

Poor Folk is Dostoevsky's first story: it won him the support of the radical critics, and, as regards technique, it shows that human kindness can be the soul of humour, and sympathy the secret of the novelist's understanding. It is a little masterpiece. *White Nights*, *A Faint Heart*, *A Christmas Party* and *The Little Hero*

exploit a sentimental vein, with touches of social satire. They date from before Dostoevsky's dreadful experience of the prison camp at Omsk and the same poetic values hold good in them as in *Poor Folk*. But the tone changes with *My Uncle's Dream* and *Most Unfortunate*. In these stories the painting of contemporary manners is done without sympathy and with a keen appreciation of the ludicrous. The youthful innocence and optimism of the first years had not survived the horrors of the Siberian prison which Dostoevsky relates in *Notes from a Dead House*. In their translation of this work, L. Navrozov and J. Gural'sky manage, by keeping very close to the Russian text, to outrage the reader's senses in a manner which gives some idea at least of the way in which the author's own sensitive nature must have been outraged by the filth, the stench and the degradation that were inflicted upon him. There is some loss of stylistic fluency as compared with previous versions in English, but the impact is greater. For instance, in the description of the hospital ward, which the prisoners were not allowed to leave at night, although some were suffering from dysentery and others from tuberculosis, the reference in this new translation to the "night bucket" and to "latrines" (where the Heinemann version has "tub" and "accommodation" and the Everyman edition simply leaves out the sentence) hits straight at the reader's sensibility and produces a physical nausea.

That the poetic element in Dostoevsky's make-up should have been crushed by the misery he experienced in the prison camp is easy to believe when one reads *Notes from a Dead House*. It is easy to believe also that uninterrupted contact with hundreds of men whose crimes were of the most violent and passionate sort—murderers, sex maniacs and sadists—

should have darkened his imagination. Nor is it surprising that he was no longer able to follow the path of the liberal idealist and social reformer after such an ordeal. Shall a man who has worn fetters weighing ten pounds day and night for four years be scorned if, from that time on, he fights in retreat, covers up and bids for official approval? Dostoevsky did bid for official approval, and it was refused, because the protesting spirit that was in him was plain for all to see. His trips abroad, of which *The Gambler* was a product, gave him a safety-valve for the venting of his indignation against "the triumph of Baal"; he diverted its action against English materialism and French bourgeois hypocrisy with xenophobic venom, but it remained with him all the same.

The Gambler is not by any means one of Dostoevsky's masterpieces. The characters of this story are sketchy and the psychology is limited to the author's own painful experience of the roulette tables and his unhappy affair with Pauline Suslova. The painting of contemporary manners is vague; it had been done with greater precision and vigour by Dostoevsky himself in *Summer Impressions* (English translation by FitzLyon, 1955, J. Calder). But the book has the advantage of showing Dostoevsky at work with the analytical technique of the "confession" novel and operating on his own substance.

The translators have all been sparing with words, which is a great virtue. It is a pity that work of as high a standard as is reached by them all should be occasionally marred by blemishes which an experienced scholar and old hand at the game could have eliminated. De Grie, in *The Gambler*, should be Des Grieux (as in *Manon Lescaut*); "Paul de Coque" should be "Paul de Kock"; "Louis-dors" should be "gold louis" or, better still, just "louis", and "friedrichdors" should be "fredericks" or "ten gulden pieces" (*ibid.*); "sideburns" (sideboards, side-whiskers) is an American word not used in England (*A Christmas Party*); a "clipper" is not an English word for a "hack" or a "nag" (*The Little Hero*)—the word used by Dostoevsky is a German word (Klepper); one does not stuff one's nose with "tobacco" (snuff), or "save oneself in" (run away into) the forest (*Notes from a Dead House*), or write a "leaf" (*Poor Folk*); and I am afraid that poor Varvara Alexeevna would never have got the things she wanted from her dressmaker, for her so sad wedding at the end of *Poor Folk*, if the instructions had had to be taken from Mr. Navrozov's English text. These are the sorts of blemishes an English reader notices; there are not many of them, but there should not be any in editions made for distribution here.

J. S. SPINK.

THE VARIETY OF SHORT STORY WRITING

Nature's Diary. Mikhail Prishvin. (FLPH, Moscow. 368 pp., unpriced.)

The Forty-First. Boris Lavrenyov. (FLPH, Moscow. 192 pp., unpriced.)

Chrysalis. Mikhail Kotsyubinsky. (FLPH, Moscow. 260 pp., unpriced.)

25 Stories from the Soviet Republics. (FLPH, Moscow. 488 pp., unpriced.)

WE sometimes tend to think of Russian writing as vast and panoramic, with its Tolstoy and Sholokhovs as fond of a broad canvas as Repin and Vereshchagin were in painting; but the land which developed the art of the ikon has also produced some remarkable literary miniaturists, and the four volumes under review serve to remind us of the range and variety of Soviet and pre-Soviet short story writing.

Mikhail Prishvin, who died in 1954, is one of the most attractive modern Russian writers. More scientific than Richard Jefferies, but more poetic than White of Selborne, he is among the few "nature writers" who have dealt with landscape and animals as a primary theme and yet brought man successfully into the picture, with sympathy but without sentimentality. *Nature's Diary* uses the natural framework of the four seasons of the year to hold together, loosely and easily, a series of sketches and stories involving the hunter and the naturalist. There are duck-shoots, pike-fishing at night with torches and spears, and a rather amusing bear-hunt that would have appealed to Chekhov. There are excavations of Stone Age settlements and a visit to a spring Nettle Festival. Some remarkable characters are portrayed, like Father Filimon, the priest without a church; his congregation has dwindled to nothing, and he lives happily as a boatman ("He'll take you wherever you like—down the Volga or all the way to Astrakhan")—still wearing his priestly garb. The descriptions of the spring floods, of the squirrels and swans, the wolves and nightingales, have the precision of the born observer's pen, but are also evocative, lyrical, and filled with the love of life.

The book by Boris Lavrenyov (1891-1959) contains three examples of the longer short story or *povest*. The title-story is the "book of the film". Those who saw *The Forty-First* will find that the story has been quite faithfully adhered to. In particular, Lavrenyov's spirited romanticism was transferred to the screen with great success: the wintry wastes of the Kara Kum with the camel-bells tinkling through the snow, the sudden storm on the Aral Sea, the "desert island" where

the two castaways from different worlds are thrown together, the moonlit beach of their brief love-affair. It is a simple, partly naïve, but somehow tragic and inevitable story, drawn in broad, firm, almost laconic strokes. Lavrenyov's other two stories, *The Seventh Satellite* and *Commandant Pushkin*, were written, like *The Forty-First*, in the 1920s, and deal with different aspects of the birth-pangs of the new Soviet State. They convey quite strikingly the sense of change, of disruption, of emergence; of divided loyalties and dawning recognitions; Dr. Zhivago would be at home in their atmosphere, though his solution was not that of his counterpart in *The Seventh Satellite*, Professor Adamov. Perhaps the hero is time itself, which is often personified:

"Time went tearing over the city, racing the sea wind and amusing itself with destruction. . . . Sometimes, worn out by this frenzied activity, Time would sprawl on its back on the low-hanging grey clouds and, puffing and wheezing, itself marvel at the tenacity of life."

The Ukrainian writer Kotsyubinsky (1864-1913) is little known in Britain, but this selection of his short stories shows that Maxim Gorky's admiration for him (he lived for a while in Italy, and was a friend of Gorky's) was not misplaced. Like Lavrenyov, Kotsyubinsky has a romantic temperament, but he shows a greater interest in the psychology of his characters, especially of the women. His gift for depicting unhappy states of mind, and often a concomitant violence in human action, leads him to the verge of melodrama (and over it in some stories). Witchcraft and hysteria, jilting, condoned adultery, morbid and tragic spinsterdom, jealousy and revenge, hallucinations of a hangman—these are some of his themes. Yet the total effect is one of strength, pathos, and a struggling hope—not of extravagance and horror. The author's attitude to his material is the important factor. One of the best stories, "What was Writ in the Book of Life", tells of a poor starving family of three generations in a crowded cottage. The old feeble grandmother, knowing she is a burden to them, asks her son to put her on a sledge and take her out into the snow to die. Horrified at first, he eventually consents, and leaves her in the wintry forest with a cross and a candle, but as he drives back to the cottage he thinks more and more about her and about his own childhood, and suddenly ("‘We have only one mother and one death’, he said to himself”) swings the horse round and goes to fetch the old woman; they will live somehow.

25 *Stories from the Soviet Republics* is a very mixed bag which contains one or two outstanding stories but also a good

deal of common ballast, including documentary and autobiographical sketches which really belong in a different volume. The publishers admit that the book "does not claim to be a representative collection", and I feel rather more thought could have gone into its compilation. One cannot, of course, comment on the literary quality of stories translated at two removes; but at least the volume is a pointer towards regions, tongues and cultures of which we are still too ignorant. The Russians (whether by design or in fair competition!) come out top with Sholokhov's "The Fate of a Man" and Kataev's "Our Father, Which Art in Heaven", both stories of war and suffering, one in a mood of stoic heroism, the other of tragic irony. It would be a hard heart that could read Sholokhov's story without being deeply moved. The most interesting work from the non-Russian republics came, I thought, from Armenia (Derenik Demirjian and Aksel Bakounts), Lithuania (Petras Cvirka), Estonia (Eduard Vilde), and Latvia (Andrejs Upits). But there are some amusing central Asian *fabliaux*; and Yuri Rytkheu, from far-off Chukotka, shows that a fresh wind may blow even in these shaman-riddled fastnesses.

EDWIN MORGAN.

FOUR NOVELS

Shadowed Paths. Ivan Bunin, tr. by Olga Shartse. (FLPH, Moscow, 453 pp., unpriced.)

The Iron Flood. Alexander Serafimovich. (FLPH, Moscow, 207 pp. Distributed by Central Books Ltd. 4/-.)

Towards New Shores. Vilis Lacis. (FLPH, Moscow, 2 vols., 821 pp. Distributed by Central Books Ltd. 6/-.)

Restless Youth. Fyodor Gladkov. (FLPH, Moscow, 266 pp. Distributed by Central Books Ltd., unpriced.)

IT is tempting to talk of "influences" in connection with the prose of Ivan Bunin. In his stories of thwarted passion and unresolved yearning such as *The Last Rendezvous* and *Sunstroke*, the names of Turgenev and Chekhov spring most readily to mind, and at the doomed Sukhodol estate, "where everyone sat round the table glaring at one another, eating and throwing the bones down to their hunting dogs, each man with a whip across his knees", we are in the night-marish country of Edgar Allan Poe: "Rain came pouring down in torrents, thunder crashed in deafening claps and lightning flashed blindingly in swift fiery snakes when, towards the end of the day, we drove up to Sukhodol. A dark mauve thundercloud slumped heavily down towards the north-west . . ."

The total effect of his work, however, is not derivative: there emerge an individual note of irony, an accomplished sense of landscape, and complete mastery of visual image: "The horse flung up its head and, smashing the moon in the puddle with a hoof, set off . . ."

It is unfortunate that almost half this present volume is occupied with the *nouvelle* called "Leka", the story of an untidy love-affair which remains exasperatingly tentative. There are too many prolix irrelevancies to convey the pungency and bite which such a situation has in life, and the characters are shadows moving behind frosted glass.

A far cry from the sometimes suffocating atmosphere of Bunin is *The Iron Flood*. The action of this, the best-known novel of Alexander Serafimovich, takes place entirely along the scorched and craggy paths of the western Caucasus. In 1918 a ragged, straggling band of diverse elements of the revolution—soldiers returning from German captivity, revolted sailors of the Black Sea Fleet, and bewildered Kuban peasant refugees from Cossack savagery—are slowly and mercilessly knit together by their elected leader into unconquerable fighting material, representative of the spirit of revolutionary ardour. This is a stirring tale of the transformation, by endurance and courage, of seemingly hopeless defeat into glorious victory, told with sharp economy of language and the direct impact of complete realism. Created in the days (1921) before the "positive hero" became *anangke*, Kozhukh, the leader, emerges naturally from the total situation as a truly noble figure.

The illustrations are first-class.

* * *

IS it ever going to be possible for a critic with a knowledge of the bases and motivations of both our worlds to be able to ask, without naïveté, for a reconciliation of points of view as to what written work qualifies as literature? The Soviet outlook leads to an assertion that for a writer apolitically to seek perfection of style, originality of expression, emphasis on individual character, or to experiment with construction, is mere sterile formalism and aestheticism. The "western" point of view is that naturalistic accounts of class-struggle, characters who are symbols of civic virtue or evil as the case may be, the whole concept of *Tendenzroman*, all constitute unctuous preaching, political pamphleteering, state journalism, prostitution of art, and the death of the soul. Can we learn from each other in these matters without for ever being at the barricades? If not, there seems no hope in literary criticism but a miserable descent to snarling bigotry on both sides, and in creative writing itself to trivial

All publications of the FLPH (Foreign Languages Publishing House), Moscow, reviewed in this issue are held in the SCR Library, and may be borrowed from it. Provincial readers are invited to make use of the library's postal lending service. FLPH editions which are available through bookshops are indicated at the heads of reviews, with their English prices.

amusement on the one hand and earnest homily on the other.

Hovering near the latter is Vilis Lacis's two-decker *Towards New Shores*, published in 1952. This story of the Latvian Soviet's struggle, symbolised by the conquering of a strangling marshland by collective effort, is efficient, readable, and even, superficially, exciting in places, but nevertheless excessively earnest, completely lacking in humour, and often bordering on the embarrassingly pious. Recommended as straightforward plain fare for the socially angry seeking vicarious triumph over the forces of evil.

Fyodor Gladkov's *Restless Youth* is more satisfying. Here is a master-hand, reminiscent of Gorki. In this short glimpse of the turbulent lives of working people on the banks of the tumbling Kuban before the revolution, Gladkov's deep seriousness of purpose is actually enhanced by humour, even farce in places. It is refreshing to read that "laughter is the strongest weapon in the struggle for life", and to discover with some surprise that the author means not the ghoulish laughter of triumph over fallen foes, but authentically human, self-critical laughter. Recommended to the discerning reader seeking vindication of Soviet literature by shining example.

W. S. BAILEY.

TALES OF JEWRY

The Great Fair. Sholom Aleichem. (Vision. 306 pp. 25/-.)

The Bewitched Tailor. Sholom Aleikhem. (FLPH, Moscow. 172 pp., unpriced.)

THE longer of these two books, *The Great Fair*, is a lightly fictionalised account of the famous Jewish writer's own childhood. The treatment is episodic, as might be expected from this adept in the short story form.

The smaller volume consists of short

stories of which the title story is one of the ablest and most amusing. These tales, to my mind, are better translated than in *The Great Fair*—although I do not know the language, it seems to me that the wry laughter, characteristic of Jewish humour, is in them more truly transmitted.

The environment is that of the Jewish communities in villages and small towns within the Czarist pale in Byelorussia. To this reviewer, an amazing aspect revealed in these books is the degree of isolation of these communities, their segregation from their Russian fellows. Almost, one might read some of these stories without realising that the people concerned were living in Russia.

This was not altogether owing to oppression under Czarism. For instance, some of the characters in these stories seem to have a more or less good-natured contempt for the Russian peasant. Also, the stringent religious and domestic observances of orthodox Jewry—dietetic and sabbatarian, for instance—and the fact that their language was different from that of their Russian fellows helped to set them apart. And there is hardly any complaint about this apartness, strangely enough.

These were societies composed chiefly of self-employed artisans, traders and a few farmers—some few fairly comfortably off, according to the standards of that time and place, and many very poor. They were emotionally attached to their native villages—Aleichem's account of his childhood contains much nostalgia and occasional idyllic passages, especially in connection with his boyhood friendships. Apparently the period was that of a lull in anti-Jewish active hostility, in those parts at least, for there is no word of pogroms and in one place the writer hints that a more marked anti-Semitism was to develop later. He was born in 1859 and is then recording events taking place when he was ten or twelve years old.

For the most part, Sholom Aleichem allows his characters to tell his stories, and this they do with vividness, saltiness, occasional vivacious or despairing exaggeration, which bring to life this shut-in world of toilers, dreamers, chaffers, learned and holy men—and also their long-suffering, overworked and rarely, but refreshingly, rebellious wives. Sholom Aleichem is sensitive and compassionate and on the side of the poor.

CHARLES ASHLEIGH.

IMMORTAL CHILDREN

Small Farm in the Steppe. V. Kataev.
(Lawrence and Wishart. 15/-.)

THOSE fortunate people who first met Gavrik, Petya and his irrepressible little brother Pavlik in *Lone White Sail*

will need no persuasion to follow their journey into adolescence.

Valentin Kataev succeeded in his first book, and in the unforgettable film which was made of it, in bringing to life the deep friendship of two small boys, Gavrik the grandson of a heroic old fisherman and Petya the child of a meticulous, liberal-minded school teacher, drawn together by the revolutionary ferment of Odessa in 1905.

In this book Petya begins to understand and play a conscious part in the great struggle of social forces into which his friendship with Gavrik had unwittingly plunged him in those earlier stormy days.

The excursion of Petya's family into tourist Europe in the early part of the book, lively and amusing enough in itself, is somewhat of a diversion from the development of the main theme, so that the book as a whole lacks some of the compelling drama of *Lone White Sail*. Once the little family sets foot on Russian soil again, the inexorable pressure of Czarist autocracy plunges it from one crisis to another, from which it only manages to extricate itself with the down-to-earth help—literally down to earth with the cherry harvest in the small farm in the steppe—of Gavrik and his revolutionary friends.

Kataev has brought to life a corner of the great struggles in pre-revolutionary Russia, and by the same token has given us two small boys who will surely join the ranks of the immortal children of all ages and all countries.

JOAN CARRITT.

A NEW TURGENEV FOR ENGLISH READERS

Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences and Autobiographical Fragments. With an essay by Edmund Wilson. Tr. with an introduction by David Magarshack. (Faber and Faber. 272 pp., 25/-.)

AS can be seen from its title, this volume, of which Mr. Magarshack gives the first English translation, is something of a miscellany, consisting as it does of Turgenev's own selection of some of his short works. Of particular interest are the four pieces introducing the reader to the Russian world of letters of the middle of the nineteenth century. These will be the more easily appreciated, thanks to Mr. Magarshack's very informative introduction and the accompanying essay.

Mr. Magarshack is a painstakingly faithful translator. If at times he allows himself to be led astray by Russian idioms (e.g. p. 106: the "little bird" is not at all "nice", but belongs to the popular saying: "The bird is small but its claw is

sharp"; p. 127: Belinsky is not "left without a four" (?) but is simply "four down"), by local topography (p. 169: "Apraxinsky dvor" is no palace, but the well-known covered market of antiques and second-hand goods), by Russian forms of Greek names (p. 238 and following: "Pegas", with the accent on the *last* syllable, is the Russian for "Pegasus"; p. 247: Demeter is Cybele, not Cibella), and case-endings of proper names (p. 154: Kirsha, not Kirsh; Omlyash, not Omlyasha, and it is Alexey who is the hero's servant), these lapses are too few and not sufficiently important to detract from the general exactitude of his work. A greater freedom of treatment might, indeed, have been beneficial, for when the English phrase, as it often does, follows somewhat laboriously the pattern of the Russian one it fails to convey the harmony and easy flow of Turgenev's admirable prose.

One item, however, stands out unhappily from the rest. It is "About Nightingales", one of the two pieces of the same type as "A Sportsman's Sketches", recounted in the words of the nightingale-catcher himself. Mr. Magarshack's solution of the difficult problem of rendering popular speech cannot be regarded as successful, for the ungrammatical patter he has chosen has nothing in common with the idiomatic but perfectly correct language of the original, and is completely out of tune with it.

It is a pity that politics intrude unnecessarily in Mr. Wilson's otherwise well-informed essay, especially the historically misleading labelling of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great as "bad masters" (see Belinsky's views p. 122) and of the February revolution of 1917 as "Kerensky's". It is curious too that, for all his justified criticism of earlier translators, he should still borrow from them the now discarded ridiculous term "little father", due to ignorance of the special values of some Russian suffixes.

TATIANA SHEBUNINA.

TRUTH ABOUT MUNICH

The Munich Conspiracy, by Andrew Rothstein. (Lawrence and Wishart. 35/-.)

FOR most people the Munich settlement has become a matter of history. Some use it as a political slogan, studded with false premises and parallels, in order to oppose an East-West agreement at the present time. Few seem to realise the extent to which the fundamental problems of world peace which were involved then still operate today. Mr. Rothstein clearly has these very much at heart in examining afresh the conditions

of 1938, the actions of the Powers concerned and, above all, the motives that prompted them. As a historian and a political observer of much practical experience and a keen theoretical understanding of the issues at stake, he has succeeded in endowing the familiar skeleton of events with flesh and blood.

In an introductory outline he sketches western relations with Germany before and under the Nazis. A discussion of the attitude of Czechoslovakia's rulers reveals that rather than accept Soviet help "they preferred to see their people go under Hitler's yoke" (p. 154). An inquiry into the labour movements in the West recalls their fateful divisions under official leaders, "for whom solidarity with the capitalists of their country came . . . before peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union" (p. 309). A few pages dispel the myth "of a passive America, playing no active part in the policies that brought about Munich" (p. 164). A chapter on the USSR shows her unflinching resolve to resist Hitler. Much information is adduced to expose the predatory aims of the Fascist Reich and to prove at the same time that had, as Russia urged, "the Powers interested in peace stood together" Germany would not have risked a general conflagration (p. 207). In this context the question is raised why the British and French governments lent themselves to the Munich Treaty. We know since 1939, and those in control in 1938 had sufficient advance warning, that "appeasement" did not spell peace. "Why not", Rothstein asks, "did they do it?" His answer is that the ruling strata in the West felt "how dangerous it was for them to go to war, because the Soviet Union and Communism would win" (p. 256). Guided chiefly by their hatred of the USSR, "they hoped, by handing over Czechoslovakia to Hitler, to keep the door open for him to commit further aggression in the east of Europe" (p. 270). We are reminded that the rescue of German

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imperialism by the western Powers in 1918, the continuous support it received from them before 1933 and their connivance at the Nazi crimes before 1938 were all part of their policy "to make Hitlerite Germany . . . the formidable engine of assault on the Soviet Union" (p. 308). Munich therefore, as the culmination of this policy, was neither a capitulation to Hitler nor appeasement. It was "a conspiracy for aggression" (p. 271).

Terse and hard-hitting, this is a well-documented book. The collection of new Munich documents issued recently by the foreign ministries in Moscow and Prague confirms Mr. Rothstein's thesis.

W.

COLD WAR HISTORY

The Kola Run. Sir I. Campbell and Capt. D. Macintyre. (Muller, 25/-.)

FOR anyone who escaped burning or blasting from bomb or torpedo, survival time if plunged into the Barents Sea in winter was counted in minutes. Even spray froze before it hit the deck.

Those were the hazards faced, the price paid by hundreds, by the merchantmen and their escorts—British, American and Russian—which brought war materials to the Soviet Union between August 1941 and March 1945.

Harried by U-boats, by bomb and torpedo-carrying aircraft from nearby enemy-occupied territory, and under the constant threat of possible annihilation by capital ships lurking in the Norwegian fjords, the convoys pressed on from Iceland, through the Greenland Sea and the narrows between Spitzbergen and the northern coastline of Norway, Finland and Russia, to their destination in the Kola Inlet.

If ever there was an opportunity to paint a picture of this, chiefly British, war-time aid to the Soviet Union with the aim of winning Soviet appreciation, sympathy and understanding of the hazards involved, this is it.

Instead Vice-Admiral Sir Ian Campbell and Captain Donald Macintyre, R.N., in *The Kola Run*, have gone out of their way to insult the government and people of that country, and to feed anti-Soviet prejudice in this.

The book is peppered with such phrases as "our grasping and unappreciative allies"; "our churlish and utterly unappreciative" ditto; ". . . gratitude entirely lacking". It gives no hint until the last page of the titanic struggle the Soviet armies were waging, "tearing the guts" out of the Germans, to use Churchill's well-known phrase.

Whatever hopes the Russians may have

had for an early opening of a second front in the west, it is hardly credible that they would have cut off their noses to spite their allies by deliberately withholding every possible support for the Russian convoys bringing them precious war materials, as the authors imply. If that support was not always on the scale the Royal Navy would have wished for in its arduous task, surely the authors could have told their readers the real, objective reasons for the alleged limitations, instead of their carping, subjective and often puerile criticisms.

They even sink to the level of the cheap and lurid novelette with such phrases as: "Pain was regarded with oriental indifference by [Soviet] surgeons and physicians"; "unsmiling political commissars who attended every occasion [in Murmansk, etc.], their mean, suspicious eyes flickering like those of cornered animals".

By insulting our war-time allies they are also insulting the men who ran the convoys, both those who survived and those who died.

It is not until the penultimate paragraph in the book that they see fit to quote the words of Mr. Ivan Maisky, war-time Soviet ambassador in London:

"The Russian convoys are a northern saga of heroism, bravery and endurance. This saga will live for ever, not only in the hearts of your people but also in the hearts of the Soviet people, who rightly see in it one of the most striking expressions of collaboration between allied governments without which our common victory would have been impossible."

How much better would it have been to have told this wonderful story in the same spirit as the appeal made last December by Soviet air ace Captain Zakhar Sorokin, who was decorated with the O.B.E. for his courage in defending the war-time convoys to Murmansk.

Addressing a message to the R.A.F. men who were his comrades in arms seventeen years ago, Captain Sorokin wrote: "We had faith in our common victory; as we were fighting for peace and happiness and not for our peoples alone but for the whole of mankind."

A rather broader and more magnanimous view, perhaps, than that of Vice-Admiral Sir Ian Campbell and Captain Donald Macintyre, R.N.

J. GRITTEN.

TIRE SOME READING

Soviet Marxism. Herbert Marcuse. (Routledge and Kegan Paul. 267 pp. 28/-.)

THE subject matter of this book is of great interest and importance. How has Marxism developed since it has become an officially established ideology?

"Marx elaborated his dialectic as a conceptual tool for comprehending an inherently antagonistic society" (p. 138). In its new setting, instead of an acid dissolving received ideas it becomes a cement. The ever-evolving dialectic method of inquiry becomes a doctrine based on unchangeable principles and foundations (p. 114). The doctrine has had to accommodate itself to great unexpected developments—socialism in one country; socialism in the most backward instead of the most advanced industrial economies; the complaisance of labour movements in the advanced countries towards capitalism.

This process of adaptation is of great interest on the plane of "history of ideas". It is even more important to study the relations between the development of official doctrines and the internal and external pressures that were playing upon the authorities that pronounced them. How far were the excesses of the Stalinist period a reaction to internal insecurity, how far to the hostility of the capitalist world, how far a mere hypertrophy of the organs of government?

Another theme of great interest is the comparison of ideologies. Does the common element in the technological way of life in advanced industrial societies outweigh, in its effects on the characters and notions of their inhabitants, the differences

due to political systems and to orthodox teachings?

Dr. Marcuse touches on these themes, and brings much learning to bear on them, but he has an unfortunate way of mixing up his own views with those that he is expounding so that it is hard to know which is which. Also he conforms to the convention of American students in this field—never to mention a point which the reader might find favourable to the Soviets without withdrawing it the next line. This makes tiresome reading, and undermines confidence in the reliability of his guidance. One has the impression that he also finds it tiresome and might have written differently if he too were not constrained by an official ideology.

JOAN ROBINSON.

SOVIET SCHOOLS

Soviet Education Today. Deana Levin.
(Staples Press. 170 pp. 15/-)

EVERYONE alert to significant changes in the world today is consumed with curiosity about what really does go on in the Soviet Union. Those who pry a little deeper want to know what makes the whole system tick. A first level of inquiry might be to wonder what has enabled the Soviet people to send up sputniks, to turn out so many engineers, to secure such enthusiasm for schools and culture. This kind of fringe interest, so widely titillated in the popular press of the world, will be well satisfied by Miss Deana Levin's data-packed yet most interesting account. But that is only a beginning. This exposition of Soviet education is far from stopping at mere documentation; Miss Levin's well-known skill in communicating "what it feels like inside" comes over particularly well in letting the reader understand not just the mechanics of the business but the actual, working atmosphere.

In studying the Soviet system more than in studying most other educational structures it is of the greatest importance to realise that the schools themselves, though of integral importance in the scheme, are only the instruments of something much bigger and more dynamic outside. The whole force of the formative influences in Soviet life is communicated here not so much by Miss Levin's descriptions, which are complete enough for this purpose, as by her quiet identification of herself with all that "communist morality" stands for. After all, that morality was described by Lenin long ago and Khrushchev last year as the main objective of education in the Soviet Union. If Miss Levin, as a writer, had been more aggressively doctrinaire, her message would not have come over so tellingly.

Yet there is also a third level of interest

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which will be well satisfied here. Miss Levin is clearly a keen and sympathetic teacher. Therefore the professional inquiries of other teachers (e.g. how things are done; how children react; how teachers and extra-curricular organisers help them to help themselves; how teachers are trained, treated and paid) are met with plenty of apt information. The author's style is direct and simple. Her story is clearly that of long experience.

There are a few weaknesses perhaps. Eighteen short chapters and forty-five pages of excellent appendices are like so many peeps into the system rather than a rounded view. The more intensive student of comparative education finds himself having to prise open some of the information to learn its full significance, or having to co-ordinate a statement here with a detail or date there. The complete absence of an index hampers this process. It is particularly necessary for a keen student of Soviet education to do this cross-referencing and supplementation because of the many changes which have taken place since about 1957, and the many more which are promised by Mr. Khrushchev's outlined programme of April 1958, which Miss Levin includes on page 121. After the book went to the press further details were given in a long note in *Pravda* on September 21, 1958; and extremely important reforms were approved by both houses of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on December 24, 1958. These changes make some of the details in this book, and some of the comments, outdated already.

However, this is just one of the misfortunes of an author in comparative education. It is much fairer if the reader pays due credit for what has been achieved—a truly excellent “inside” picture of aims and practices moving away from some of the arid formalism of continental tradition towards a dynamic association with life in a very dynamic society.

EDMUND KING.

A SURVEY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

An Outline of Russian Literature. Marc Slonim. (Oxford University Press. 253 pp. 7/6.)

MR. SLONIM'S book replaces the work by Maurice Baring in the Home University Library. Baring's book, which first appeared in 1914, had, inevitably, become out of date. The present volume adds a chapter on Soviet literature and a bibliographical note. It also packs far more factual information into its pages and the reader must accept this increased factual substance in place of the very

human commentary, with its wide perspective on European culture as a whole, which was the chief attraction of Baring's work. When Mr. Slonim is content to write in a straightforward and simple manner he writes well, but far too often the bad influence of American academic criticism, which dotes on lists of stylistic devices, sense impressions, symbolic meanings and statistics, makes his prose merely pedestrian. His chapter on Belinsky, being simple and direct, is well worth reading, but Gogol is put through the formalist mincing-machine: he “reproduces sounds, smells and shapes with almost uncanny verbal and phonetic brilliancy”. Mr. Slonim makes much use of style-study; on the other hand he does not disdain methods which seem to conflict with those of formalism. Pushkin is submitted to the most brutal of determinisms, that of the blood. The “negro” blood attributed to him by Maurice Baring is replaced by “African” or “Abyssinian” blood, and this blood is made responsible for Pushkin's “impulsiveness”. I do not know by what sort of laws of heredity “impulsiveness” is transmitted by the genes, but the fact that Pushkin had seven other great-grandparents besides the Ethiopian Hannibal fills one's mind with doubts. What Mr. Slonim might have mentioned was that Pushkin, far from being ashamed of having “Peter the Great's nigger” as an ancestor, was proud of the fact. One cannot say everything in a short history, it is true, but one is at liberty to choose some things and neglect others, and one's choice is often significant of one's attitude of mind.

In the chapters on Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, the language of thesis-writing and that of advertisement copy “coexist in perilous equilibrium” (to borrow one of the author's metaphors). The following is from the concluding paragraph on Dostoevsky: “These tragedies, filled with dialogues, monologues, and stage effects, reveal not only the tremendous imaginative power of their creator, but also all the pitfalls and aspirations of human nature which Dostoevsky was probing with a ruthlessness bordering on voluptuousness and with a sensitivity to pain akin to masochistic delight—but always with a clairvoyance of terrifying intensity, as if the eye were glimpsing heaven and hell through clouds riven by a thunderbolt.” In the following the thesis-writer triumphs: “There are 559 characters in *War and Peace*, and all of them are highly individualised, animated by their own emotions and inner strivings, and preserving distinct physical and mental idiosyncrasies.” The final chapter, on Soviet literature, is mercifully straightforward, but it is lacking in depth. One would not gather from it that writing in a land owned by the industrial and agricultural workers and writing for the intelligentsia

of the West are two very different things ; there is in fact an entire lack of sympathy in the author's approach to the problems which face Soviet writers. But the chapter is useful in providing an account of what has been written since 1917 and by whom.

J. S. SPINK.

★ ★ ★

Readers may also be interested in the following note on the work of Mr. Slonim, which appeared in "Russkaya literatura," 1959, No. 1, published in Leningrad by the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) of the USSR Academy of Sciences :

M. Slonim's book *Modern Russian Literature : From Chekhov to the Present* (New York, 1953) is the sequel to the same author's *The Epic of Russian Literature : From its Origins through Tolstoy* (New York, 1950) and falls into two parts, roughly equal in size: the first on pre-revolutionary literature, which also contains a chapter on the whole of Gorky's writing, and the second on Russian Soviet literature. . . . In the preface the author hastens to point out that he is "firmly opposed" both to the ideas of communism as a whole and to Marxist aesthetics in particular.

A feature of Slonim's work is an unhealthy preoccupation with particular questions of the personal life of writers. Anecdotes of dubious origin about Soviet writers are used in the book, which is not in keeping with the traditional understanding of scholarly work.

The composition of the book suffers from lack of clarity. . . . The general picture of the literary process proves disjointed in time and space. This is because Slonim places monographic studies of individual writers quite arbitrarily in various chapters of the book. As a result Gorky's creative work is excluded from the history of Soviet literature, as the essay about him is put in the first part of the book, before the chapter "1905". One could quote many similar examples. A serious weakness of the composition is connected with the essay on *émigré* literature. Even setting aside the whole question of the correctness of including this material in a history of Russian literature, it is still impossible to understand what considerations led the author to attach it unnaturally to the end of the section on Soviet literature in the Thirties.*

The book contains many false premises, arising in a number of cases from the author's lack of familiarity with one

question or another ; but more often it is a result of conscious silence or distortion of the facts. In speaking, for example, of the appearance of the proletcult in September 1918, Slonim might not have known that proletcults existed even before the October revolution and that attempts were made to unite them in April and March 1917. This is possibly why he makes the proletcult appear to be an organisation supported by the Communist Party. However, when in enumerating the writers who were on the side of Soviet power he mentions only Bryusov and Ieronim Yasinsky the explanation must be sought elsewhere. It is doubtful that the author did not know such writers as Serafimovich, Mayakovsky, Bedny, Veresaev, not to mention Blok, who appealed "with all his heart and conscience" to hearken to the revolution. In this instance and analogous ones the author follows arch-reactionary literary critics like Struve. Like them Slonim includes in the history of Russian Soviet literature the works of writers who are profoundly hostile to it ; the extensive section on Zamyatin may serve as an example. An exaggerated interest in false and debatable works is characteristic of Slonim ; he is equal to Struve in his search for the literary "models" on which Soviet literature is supposed to be based. Thus, without substantiating his claim, he regards Forsh as a successor to Merezhkovsky. Finally, Slonim copies Struve in his demagogic anti-Soviet attacks. Yet where it is a matter of factual material on the outstanding creations of Soviet literature the author at times contradicts his own position. He values Fedin's works highly, not only the early novels, but *Early Joys* and *No Ordinary Summer* as well. He speaks of Prishvin as a brilliant stylist and stresses his immense optimism, love for people and strong faith in man's creative activity. The poetry of Tikhonov and Bagritsky and the novels of Fadeev and Kataev are spoken of as undoubted achievements of our art. A. Tolstoy's works receive specially high praise, and his novel *Peter the First*, which "became a classic of Soviet literature", is included by the author "among the best historical works in Russian literature" (p. 374). He speaks with delight and respect of Soviet literature in the period of World War II. In other instances his appreciations are biased and tendentious. Thus the importance of some writers and books which have rightly been criticised is artificially blown up by Slonim (for example, Zoshchenko, Pasternak and Olesha). On the other hand, undeniably outstanding works, like Sholokhov's novels, are undervalued. It is curious to notice that a factual picture of the achievements of Soviet literature appears clearly in the book even through the fog of calumny and demagoguery and refutes the author's conceptions

* The author's conclusion that *émigré* literature has provided "no fresh trends, no new schools or individual writers of considerable importance" (p. 406) is rather interesting. In his book *Russian Literature in Exile* (Chekhov Publishing House, New York, 1956), Struve on the whole arrives at the same conclusion.

which are permeated with hostility towards the Soviet Union. . . . Even in the section on post-war literature, which the author does his best to declare is in "decline", the factual material he uses turns against him. He has to mention Panova's works, which contain "an excellent study of characters, full of warm humour and psychological insight" (p. 431), the success of Fadeev's *The Young Guard*, the merits of Pavlenko's *Happiness*, and Fedin's novels.

At the end of the book Slonim expresses his belief in the great future of Russian literature. In so doing however, he tries to set himself up as a prophet preaching in the wilderness. The blinkers of his anti-Soviet conceptions hide from him what the factual material in his book proves: where he sees a wilderness, there rises the graceful but solid building of Soviet literature.

A. BRUKHANSKY.

ON POSITIVE HEROES

The Positive Hero in Russian Literature.
Rufus W. Mathewson, Jr. (Columbia University Press. 364 pp. 48/-.)

BY the "positive hero" Professor Mathewson means the hero of a work whose primary intention is to answer the question in the title of Chernyshevsky's novel *What is to be Done*? Such a novelist conceives art as having the purpose to assist the political and social advance of the people, and in his "positive hero" he seeks to embody those moral qualities which the people's cause demands of the individual.

Professor Mathewson finds the origins of the ideal of the "positive hero" and of the associated conception of literature in the theories of Belinsky, Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky, to each of whom he devotes a chapter. He then traces a continuity between their ideas and those of Lenin, whom he considers to have impoverished the humanism still surviving in Marxism by his narrow and rigid edict that literature must serve the revolution. First exemplified in Gorki's *Mother*, the deliberate subordination of literature to political exigency has reached its climax in the machine-made heroes of the Soviet novel and in the theory of socialist realism as expounded by Zhdanov, with which Professor Mathewson closes his study.

With this advance and triumph of the "positive hero" Professor Mathewson contrasts the work of the classical novelists, who, he says, "anchored their concept of character in the timeless biological cycle of human life. . . ." Between the art which expresses that vision of man and the propaganda which would enforce a rigid code of political virtue there is complete incompatibility. We must choose

between them; and in the author's opinion we must commit ourselves "to the proposition that one of the distinguishing marks of man's humanity is his fallibility, that weakness, compromise and defeat are elements of all men's lives, and that a novelist's failure to say so represents a degrading kind of falsification".

But it is also falsification to say nothing of men's strength, resolution and triumphs. The flaw in Professor Mathewson's method is that he studies a movement in literature apart from a movement in society which prepared and achieved the victory of the socialist revolution and has advanced to the building of socialist society. The history of Russian literature over the last 100 years is not one of successive defeats of the imaginative artist by the dehumanised revolutionary. It is a history of conflict within art itself between the old and the new in an era of revolution; and the new is more living than the old.

Professor Mathewson writes in defence of imaginative literature against soulless propaganda. But could a literature be imaginative which anchored its concepts "in the timeless biological cycle of human life" and explored human fallibility and weakness when humanity is from day to day enlarging its power to change itself and the world?

The socialist revolution sets men free to use that power; and the development in literature which Professor Mathewson describes as the emergence of the "positive hero" is part of that revolution. There have been admitted weaknesses in the theory and practice of socialist realism; but the new movement in literature must be judged not by whether it recognises man's eternal fallibility, but by its imaginative vision of man's power and responsibility in a new time.

ALICK WEST.

A WEIRD BOOK

Early Soviet Writers. Vyacheslav Zavalishin.
(Published for the Research Program on the USSR by Frederik A. Praeger, New York, and in the UK by Atlantic Books. 394 pp. 65/-.)

THIS book is weird. It gives one the uncanny effect of looking in a cracked mirror. Everything that is worst, most obtuse, most insensitive, most arbitrary, most suspicious in hostile Soviet criticism of Soviet writers is here repeated in exact reverse. Where harsh or anxious Soviet administrators, jealous Soviet literary cliques or just simply mediocre critics have delved into a Soviet author's works and come up with undigested gob-bets as proofs of that author's "unreliability" or "unhealthy" tendency, the writer of this book waves the same bits and pieces triumphantly as "proof" of the same anti-Sovietism, differing only in

that where they seek to blame he of course finds grounds, equally flimsy or the result of total failure in comprehension, to praise.

Examples of the method are where Zoshchenko's brilliant and witty early sketches of the little man bewildered in a changing society are exalted as portrayals of the sufferings of humanity under Socialism; where the ironically observed and vividly laconic realism of a Babel soldier acclaiming in one cry: "Pickles and world revolution!" or of a Babel Cossack wearing a cast-off bowler hat cheering on Voroshilov and Budyenny in silver-piped trousers becomes transmuted to proof that a disillusioned Babel was denouncing in veiled fashion the restoration of class distinctions; where Leonov's realistic portrayal of characters and events becomes a deliberate rejection of "Utopian" myth tantamount almost to rebellion against Soviet power; where Mayakovsky's suicide has nothing whatsoever to do with overwork, unrequited love or the pestering of the rival "leftist" literary cliques that so badgered him towards the close of his life but becomes testimony to a final and solemn repudiation of Communism.

Certainly the young Russian of the revolution inherited a mystic mishmash of writers irreconcilably opposed to it and favouring symbolism or even monarchism. Certainly the tensions and strains, outside and inside, to which Soviet society has been subjected in its development have included writers (and by no means Jewish writers only) among their casualties, at times quite unjustly. Certainly in the Soviet Union even good writers, as they have got old, have sometimes written more flatly and less brightly than in the heyday of their youth (a phenomenon, unless I mistake me, not wholly unknown in other countries).

By assembling all these categories, by adding fantastic distortions in the manner I have instanced, by almost totally ignoring meritorious writers (e.g. Fadeev, Tikhonov, Fedin, Sholokhov) whose political attitude or literary achievement is less easy to distort, or remarking (quite untruthfully) that their work belongs to a different period, the author contrives to give an unrelieved picture of an entire intellectual generation outwardly or inwardly opposed to the régime, the whole lot of them sooner or later corrupted, sycophantic or shot, sometimes all three. There is an enormous number of writers listed in this (in any case) indigestible compilation, and I do not pretend to know enough about the period to be able to assert that anything like all that is said about all of them is wrong. I do know quite enough about it, the works quoted, the authors (some of whom, both among those now dead and those still living, have been and are personal friends) to be able to testify that the total impression

conveyed is utterly misleading. If the author of this book believes what he has written he must be the biggest ass on earth. All we are told of him is that he was born in the Soviet Union, graduated at Leningrad University, worked in the USSR as a journalist and scenario-writer, left the USSR (in an unmentioned manner) in 1942 (that is the period of the gravest military danger for the Soviet people) and, it seems, has not returned. It appears that "the preparation and publication of this study [save the mark—I.M.] were made possible by a grant from the Research Program on the USSR (East European Fund, Inc.)" and that the work is No. 20 in the series of studies of the Research Program on the USSR and No. 66 of Praeger publications in Russian History and World Communism. *Sancta simplicitas!* If this is the sort of scholarship the younger generation in the USA is being nourished on, God save its sanity and the rest of the world from the future consequences of its ignorance.

IVOR MONTAGU.

A NAÏVE RECAP

The Russian Revolution. Alan Moorehead. (Collins with Hamish Hamilton. 320 pp. 30/-)

IT was rather hard on Mr. Moorehead—an experienced journalist on the Conservative side, at home and abroad, a vivid writer of front-line messages during the war and historical "reconstructions" since—to offer him the assignment of a book on the Russian revolution, when on his own admission he had no "specialised knowledge of Russia or the revolution" (whether he knows any Russian is not clear, but not a single work in Russian is mentioned in his bibliography).

But the editors of *Life Magazine* wanted a book which would fill out the somewhat scanty results of research at a Roman Catholic university in the USA on the 1914-18 records of the German Foreign Ministry, and offered him the assignment. He decided to make use of "sources such as are available in any good library", and by an unhappy chance (apart from Lenin's letters to his family and John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook The World*) hit upon only such sources as would serve the purpose of challenging "the orthodox Communist attitude towards Lenin and the revolution".

The result is a piece of vivid journalism almost wholly unconnected with history (except for some dates).

The Czar is presented as a good and gentle creature, remote, perhaps, and therefore too devoted to the principle of autocracy—without any sign that Mr. Moorehead knows of the existence of innumerable marginal notes, letters and diary entries by the Czar, or memoirs of his high-placed contemporaries, revealing

him to be a bloodthirsty, treacherous and inhuman despot.

The Russian people are depicted as almost sub-human, plunged in lethargic indolence, a prey only to their emotions, now unable to conceive of any alternative to their Czar, now breaking out in fits of madness to burn and destroy—without any evidence that Mr. Moorehead has any idea of the development of class-consciousness and political understanding among the peasants and the workers, over three generations, that even an impeccably non-Bolshevik book like Mavor's *Economic History of Russia* (1914) would have given him.

The Bolshevik Party reveals itself, under his pen, as involved in failure after failure before 1917, largely isolated from the workers, and Lenin as a still more remote doctrinaire, alternately immersed in a kind of Tammany Hall intrigue and plunged in listless indifference—without the slightest indication (for example) that Mr. Moorehead knows of the existence of innumerable published reports by the Okhrana (secret police), between 1903 and 1917, which tell a very different story.

And as, nevertheless, the Russian working class went over to the Bolsheviks in November 1917, while the main mass of the Russian peasantry at its two Congresses that month decided to support the Soviet Government, Mr. Moorehead finds the key in German gold. He uses for this purpose a summary of the meagre fragments from the German archives mentioned above—without appearing to realise that those documents in them which were judged (by anti-Soviet students) to be most telling have already been published textually in this country, and have turned out to prove not at all what he thinks they prove.

Probably, with his lack of "specialised knowledge", Mr. Moorehead does not realise that all he has provided is what journalists call a "recap" of a number of anti-Soviet books, done, it is true, by a skilful if naïve hand.

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN.

COSMIC RAYS

Cosmic Rays. G. Zhdanov. (Lawrence and Wishart. 146 pp. 4/6.)

THE Russians are building up a tradition in the presentation of science for popular audiences which fills me with envy. In all fields they seem to be leaping ahead in their endeavour to make clear the tremendous advances going on in every field of scientific endeavour. This endeavour is of course linked up with their general outlook on the key significance of science in the everyday world.

This book is a good example of popular science writing. It does not reach heights as did Eddington (I mean this purely in terms of writing and not of

course philosophically) or does Haldane. But it is good. It is designed for the average reader, and no one can finish it without having made a tremendously exciting voyage of discovery.

At the second international conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy organised by the United Nations and held in Geneva last summer, sessions were devoted to progress in fundamental physics. Man's own efforts to devise machines to provide intense beams of high-energy particles were described by, for example, V. I. Veksler of the USSR. He told of the first experiments with a ten-billion electron volt (Bev) synchrophasatron in which studies of multiple-particle production were carried out.

But the energies obtained were insignificant compared with what occurs in nature. Britain's C. F. Powell gave details of experimental work on cosmic ray particles with energies as great as 100,000 Bev which had been found at heights of 50,000 feet.

V. A. Petukhov of the USSR confirmed that a band of highly energetic particles surrounds the earth. The Americans have already given details of this band, the Van Allen belt, which it is suggested might lead to space travellers having to take off from the earth's polar regions, where it is believed the radiation band is at its weakest. Certainly when the IGY data are finally worked over we shall know a great deal more about these mysterious particles from outer space that are linked with the sun, and with the creation of our universe in some ways.

These cosmic rays have also provided us with information about new and hitherto unknown particles—the mesons. These particles represent forces different from that commonly known to us, for example electromagnetic force or gravitational force. This mesonic force may very well be the "glue" of the universe.

But this is speculation, and although author Zhdanov excites the imagination he does not lead us astray.

One criticism: although foreign scientists are given their due, I found it somewhat objectionable to have almost every Russian mentioned as being the first to do something or other. For example, on page 26 Skobeltsyn is described as "the first to use the Wilson cloud chamber in the study of cosmic rays." On page 27 we read: "Here we shall only note that already in 1927 Skobeltsyn was the first in the world . . ." Scientifically, the fact that he may have been first is irrelevant in this text.

This book should be in the hands of every sixth-former and every teacher who wants a good, easy, yet thoroughly reliable introduction to a field of scientific work whose theoretical implications are destined to advance our knowledge of the universe and the nature of matter.

MAURICE GOLDSMITH.

FOR STUDENTS OF RUSSIAN

Russian Syntax. F. M. Borrás and R. F. Christian. (Oxford University Press. 404 pp. 35/-)

It is not easy to present Russian syntax to an English-speaking student, as the subject of syntax is much neglected and hardly touched upon in books on English grammar. This attempt to explain Russian constructions therefore deserves recognition. The title, however, is somewhat misleading, since, as the authors say, they are not concerned with the theory of syntax, nor with classifying the various types of sentence. In addition, they do not deal with that other important part of syntax, the grouping of words (in Russian *slovosochetanie*), i.e. the combination of words which constitute the building material of a sentence. Academician Vinogradov says that in the various types of *slovosochetanie*, formed in accordance with established rules, lies the national character of a language.

The book is intended to help English-speaking students to write good Russian prose. For this purpose numerous illustrations are given from Soviet literature and the Soviet press, as well as from nineteenth-century authors. These examples are most interesting and well chosen. On the other hand, the grammatical explanations are, unfortunately, rather confusing, owing to the introduction of terms which do not comply with "aspectual" thinking. Speaking of the "imperfective present" and "perfective present" impedes a clear understanding of aspects, particularly since in English the present perfect is a past tense. In section 189 we read that the imperfect present may express a single completed action. In section 198, after giving "completion" of an action as characteristic of the perfective aspect, the book tells us that it is not always the fact of completion that matters. But in the two given examples the different aspects of the same verb are very clear: in the first, "Shor was interrogating the men"; in the second "F.F. got the grooms interrogated." In translating an English sentence into Russian one must first see what it means, and then forget about the tense that is used in English. Instances occur in the book where a passage from a Russian author (e.g. Tolstoy in section 187) is presented as a "rendering" of an English passage, in which translation has already introduced a change in syntax. The Russian "rendering" could not have been derived from the English as given. A clear understanding of aspects and a correct approach to thinking in terms of aspect and not of tense are essential for writing correct Russian.

The "perfective present" is, surprisingly, included among the moods, but even in its modal use it (properly the future

Russian Syntax

ASPECTS OF MODERN
RUSSIAN SYNTAX AND
VOCABULARY

F. M. BORRÁS AND
R. F. CHRISTIAN

The purpose of this book, which is not concerned with the theory of syntax or sentence classification, is to help English-speaking students who have mastered the basic grammar to overcome some of the difficulties of writing good Russian prose. It should be useful to students at all stages of a university course. 35s. net

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perfect) remains within the indicative mood, which, incidentally, is not mentioned at all, although in modern Russian it is often used instead of the subjunctive.

The sections on the translation of common nouns, verbs and other parts of speech are interesting and helpful, apart from minor errors and inaccuracies, e.g. the statement in section 19 that *dolg* ("debt") may be used only in the plural (in section 56 the singular form is actually quoted). Other points are: the subjunctive in Russian is the past tense with the conjunction *chtoby*, not *chto* (section 264); the use of the particle *by* after other parts of speech is not explained; particles in general, and their function in the Russian language, are not treated at all; the absence of an idiom equivalent to the English "there is" and the construction replacing it are not dealt with.

The authors have put a great deal of work into this book, which will certainly be appreciated by students of Russian.

ANNA H. SEMEONOFF.

LEARNING BOTH WAYS

Ot dvukh do pyati (From Two to Five); 13th revised ed. K. Chukovsky. ("Sovetskaya Rossiya," 1958. 387 pp. 6r. 35k.)

THE quality of Soviet books for children, and particularly for young children, is recognised throughout the world. Even the cheapest and most expendable of these books—the paper-covered kind that are not bought to mark any special occasion and that the toddler may eventually scribble on without arousing protest—bear witness to affection, ingenuity and care. They are bright and well-produced, the illustrations are good, and the text is always simple, gay and eminently repeatable. But the most striking thing about these books is that they are never pointless. The Enid Blyton type of book (I mention the name because it is so well known, but there are many worse) which treats the child as a junior equivalent of the tired businessman, someone to be entertained and kept quiet with the minimum of trouble, someone whose time is to be killed in a pleasurable way, is—I think—unknown. However unpretentious the story or rhyme, its aim is somehow to develop the child's intelligence and character, to enlarge the world in which it lives.

One of the men responsible for this deeply ingrained attitude of respect for the child is Korney Chukovsky, himself a prolific writer of children's verse, and incidentally the astonishingly skilful translator of English nursery rhymes—and of Lewis Carroll—into Russian. In 1925 Chukovsky first published a book called *Malenkie Deti* about the speech and be-

haviour of small children, interspersed with advice to writers of children's literature. The thirteenth revised and amplified edition of the book, which had since been re-titled *Ot dvukh do pyati* ("From Two to Five"), appeared in 1958. In the meantime thousands of Soviet parents and teachers had responded to Chukovsky's appeal for additional observation data; indeed, something like a movement for recording the sayings and doings of pre-school-age children had sprung up all over the country. Even parents of babies yet unborn would write to Chukovsky for advice about the best way of keeping "a chronicle of the first five years of our child's life". Naturally, such a desire is partly motivated by sheer parental pride. But there is another, more objective motive: a widespread wish to know and understand the workings of children's minds so as to discover the most fruitful ways of approaching and forming them.

Devoted observer that he is, Chukovsky would not, of course, deny that the small child lives, as the saying goes, "in a world of its own". But he is a Marxist, too, and a follower of Gorky and Makarenko: childhood is not, to him, a golden world separated from the rest of life by the barrier of awakening consciousness, but an integral and essential part of life as a whole. There is not a trace of sentimentality in his loving analysis of the child's conception of the world around it; he would no more want to keep that conception alive beyond the appointed time than he would want to retain for ever the quaintness of peasant speech. Both represent a stage, and both are subject to the laws of progress.

Because so large a part of the book's substance is purely linguistic, it would hardly be possible to translate it into English without explanatory footnotes to almost every paragraph. That is a great pity. Like many hybrid works—hybrid because it derives equally from the fields of child psychology, education, literature and (since Chukovsky is an artist) poetry and humour—it is quite exceptionally attractive. Apart from the actual sayings reproduced—which are bound to appeal to anyone who has ever listened to a toddler—the most interesting chapters are those about the verses composed by small children, particularly their metre and rhyme; the child's instinctive search for logic in language and the material world; and the vast importance of the fairy tale in early education. But most impressive of all is the attitude which Chukovsky represents and which he has, to some extent, helped to engender: the attitude which regards the small child as a member of society, with something to give and a great deal to receive, with its own demands—cultural as well as physical—and its own rights.

ANNA BOSTOCK.

A TEXTBOOK OF CHEMISTRY

General Chemistry. N. Glinka. (FLPH, Moscow, 690 pp. Distributed by Central Books Ltd. and Collet's Holdings Ltd. 37/6.)

PRESUMABLY the main difference between writing a textbook on general chemistry for students of science on the one hand and for students in non-chemical colleges on the other is that in the latter case the interest must be titillated—although most teachers would probably claim that this is a good requirement even for teaching to a “captive” student body. However, it does appear that in the introductory material of this book—addressed to non-chemical colleges—rather more trouble than usual has been taken to explain why chemistry matters, but one could only pass a firm judgment on this by comparing against chemical texts intended for chemical students in the USSR.

The treatment—at roughly equivalent to G.C.E. O-level standard—is very thorough but clearly presented. The frequent and clear diagrams and the general production are superior to those of many Russian-produced books which have previously been seen in Britain.

Short biographies of leading scientific workers are interspersed in the text. Naturally in these there is more attention to Russian workers than one would normally find in British or American-produced textbooks, but this is not obtrusive and all the historic giants of chemistry receive due credit. In addition, we now sometimes find that Russian workers were, in fact, pioneers in certain fields and that the news did not reach British compilers of textbooks due to the original publication being in obscure journals and to the general neglect of Russian work in America and Europe.

As usual, the earlier chapters deal with basic questions of atoms, molecules, structure of solids and the periodic classification. Hydrogen is treated here as a prelude to the discussion of water and the properties of aqueous solutions. Discussion of all other elements follows this introductory group of chapters. There is a good balance between fundamental and applied chemistry, and the economic importance is often illustrated with statistics rather than in vague generalities.

The final chapter on the atomic nucleus carries the subject right up to date with an illustration of a nuclear reactor and some notes about the way in which power is obtained.

I suppose that the intended targets of this publication are establishments in territories such as India or Burma where higher instruction is carried out in English, and this book will therefore compete with those written directly by English-speaking authors. It is a strong competitor and shows very little evidence of

the woodenness in phrasing which sometimes characterises translations.

Only two misprints were found. Platinum is misspelt at the head of page 649, and Seaborg's name on page 664. I should be glad to think that Britain could return the compliment and the cultural exchange with an equally polished production of a Russian edition of scientific instruction material.

ISRAEL BERKOVITCH.

ADVENTURE IN COOKING

The Home Book of Russian Cookery. Nina and George Froud. (Faber and Faber, 253 pp., 16/-.)

FABER & FABER have added to their interesting list of books on home cooking in various lands a book of Russian cookery by Nina and George Froud.

To those of us who have been more conscious of Russian achievements in other fields this will prove an amusing diversion.

Little is known of regional Russian cooking. Here we have recipes from all over the Soviet Union—Georgia, Ukraine, the Baltic, Kamchatka, Central Asia, etc.—based sometimes on simple ingredients, sometimes on the more exotic. Particularly welcome to the English cook are many recipes for different kinds of soups substantial enough to form the main dish of a meal.

There are also many novel ways of cooking fish, which could add a touch of glamour to the common cod and haddock. As one might expect, shellfish occupy an honoured place in the Russian menu. There is no reason why the excellent British prawn and Scotch salmon should not take on new interest *à la russe*!

Russians, like the French, prepare vegetables as a course in themselves, and although some of these dishes may prove a trifle rich for the British stomach many of them suggest new ideas for vegetarian meals. Particularly intriguing are the recipes for:

- (a) beetroot stuffed with apples and rice;
- (b) carrot soufflé;
- (c) Moldavian aubergines.

The *bliny* (Russian pancakes) are different, inasmuch as they are made with yeast, and serving them with caviar, smoked salmon, sour cream and herring anchovies makes them most unusual and tasty. Potato flour is normally used for *Kisel*. Since this is procurable in England there is no reason not to use it.

Enterprising cooks will welcome this book as a means to enhancing their culinary art, and the Frouds are to be thanked for a comprehensive collection of rare as well as common recipes

ANNA BARR.

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